www.choice.com.au
JULY 2004

CHOICE

Independent information for smart consumers

Tests

WALL OVENS
DISHWASHERS
STEAM STATIONS
OLIVES
PLUNGER COFFEE

GYMS

It's a jungle out there ...

WHAT'S THAT FISH?

Are you getting what you paid for?

BABY FOOD

Checking out what's in it

COMING SOON ...

Baby monitors

When it comes to bugging baby, which monitors give the best signal?

Olive oil

Does extra virgin mean extra fresh when it comes from a supermarket?

Vacuum cleaners

Mid-price cleaners are put to the turbo-charge test.

Subscribe to CHOICE

PERSONAL SUBSCRIPTIONS
One year $66, two years $123.
COMPANIES/INSTITUTIONS
One year $105, two years $200.
For subscription and renewal enquiries only, call 1800 069 552.

CONTACT US

WRITE to us at CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204.
PHONE us on (02) 9577 3399.
FAX us on (02) 9577 3377.
EMAIL us at ausconsumer@choice.com.au

Buyer beware

Jane Mackenzie, **Editor**

... And there's a lot of that about at the moment.

For example (see page 20), a pilot study has shown you have a one-in-five chance of not getting what you paid for when buying barramundi or red emperor (fresh and cooked). The misnaming can be accidental or intentional, but either way it erodes consumer confidence in buying fish.

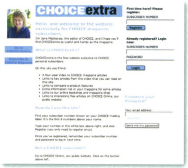
Then our survey of gym users showed up big variations in the quality of service, facilities and staff across the industry (page 8). Despite codes of practice in most states, a significant number of our survey respondents complained about a number of issues, including not being informed of eligible discounts, no fitness assessment, not being shown how to use gym equipment, and not being advised on an exercise program.

Even commercial baby food's not free of the buyer beware angle (page 35). While all manufacturers meet the law's requirements for labelling their products, some go further and provide ingredient information that lets you know precisely how much 'real' food is in the product vs water, thickeners and so on.

It's not a new message, but it's a depressingly recurrent one. When buying both products and services, you can't assume they'll be high-quality or even what you thought they were meant to be. Do some research, shop around, ask questions and know your rights.

FOR MEMBERS ONLY

www.CHOICEextra.com.au



The free website exclusive to CHOICE magazine personal subscribers, with a four-year index and links to many articles online.

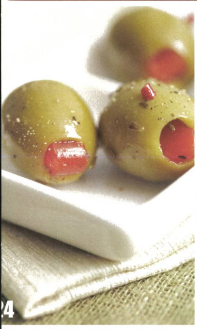
Look out for the symbol in magazine articles — it indicates there's extra info on CHOICEextra. This month you have access to our interactive 'Compare-a-dishwasher' tool.

To use this free website you'll need to log in with your subscriber number, which is the eight-digit number above your name on the mailing label that comes with the magazine.

CHOICE SHOPPER best value

All you need is the model name and number you want to buy, the price you want to beat, and your CHOICE subscriber number (from the mailing label with the magazine). CHOICE Shopper is available to personal subscribers only.

Call 1300 360 655



CONTENTS

July 2004

COVER STORY

8 Gyms: it's a jungle out there...
Our survey reveals that the quality of services, facilities and staff vary a great deal within the fitness industry.
Photo: Royalty Free

REPORTS

18 Reader car reviews
CHOICE subscribers tell us their experiences with three small car models.

20 What's that fish?
You're not always getting what you think.

TESTS

14 Plunger coffee
Can you buy good-quality pre-ground coffee to drink at home?

21 Steam stations
They're heavily advertised but do they really take the chore out of ironing?

24 Olives
Everything you wanted to know about olives — and a few things you probably didn't.

28 Bandaids
Trialists judge which ones provide both comfort and staying power.

31 Dishwasher update
You don't have to spend a fortune to get your dishes washed well.

35 What's for dinner, baby?
How can you tell how much 'real' food is in a can or jar of baby food?

41 Multifunction wall ovens
Electric ovens that let you cook up a storm with ease.

REGULARS

4 Choice Cuts
7 Your Letters
30 Food Bites: Fruitless cordial?; food habits; unhealthy fats
34 Hip Pocket: Reverse mortgages; Idol costs
46 Computing Choice: Antivirus software
47 Consumer Bookshelf
49 Recalls and bans
51 CHOICE index: August 2003 – July 2004
52 The Hard Word

UPDATE

MARMALADE

CHOICE, April 2004

When's an orange not an orange? When it's in marmalade, it seems.

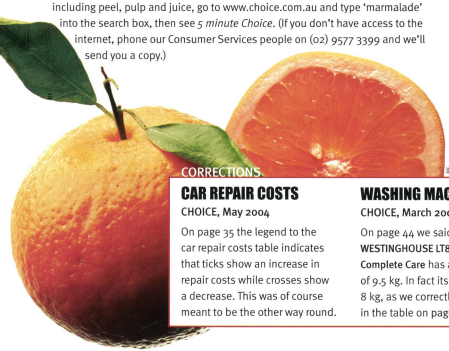
In our April article we ranked various brands of orange marmalade by the percentage of 'oranges' stated on the label, not including juice or orange pulp listed as separate ingredients. But we were mistaken in believing — as we think most consumers would, too — that 'oranges' necessarily means the whole fruit. We've since discovered that 'oranges' can be interpreted in different ways:

- Industry sources tell us that, while some manufacturers do the right thing, some take 'oranges' to be any combination of orange peel, orange pulp and orange juice. In fact, all three can be sourced in a preprocessed state (despite pictures of fresh juicy oranges on the label).
- Others start from whole oranges but discard some (or all) of the peel, pulp or juice.
- And still others tell us that the percentage of 'oranges' stated on the label means exactly what it says — the percentage of whole orange, although in some cases these oranges are brought into the factory pre-chopped and frozen.

As an example of what the different interpretation can mean to an assessment of 'orange' content, **ALDI Grandessa** marmalade uses orange juice, peel and pulp as separate ingredients — and labels them separately, giving the percentage of each. As such 'oranges' aren't listed on its label and in our table we showed it as having '0%' oranges. In terms of orange *components*, though **Grandessa** marmalade has 55% fruit content, comparable with the marmalades at the top of our April table and its price puts in on a par with the other value-for-money brands in our April article. **IGA MAPLE GROVE Breakfast** and **BAXTERS Fine Cut Orange** marmalades are also labelled in this way and have 53% and 22% total orange content respectively.

We'd like to see all manufacturers that use preprocessed peel, pulp and juice label their product in this way and not describe orange components as whole fuit. The word 'oranges' in the ingredients list should mean just what it says. CHOICE has asked the various state government bodies responsible to investigate.

For a revised table of orange marmalades, showing the total fruit content including peel, pulp and juice, go to www.choice.com.au and type 'marmalade' into the search box, then see *5 minute Choice*. (If you don't have access to the internet, phone our Consumer Services people on (02) 9577 3399 and we'll send you a copy.)



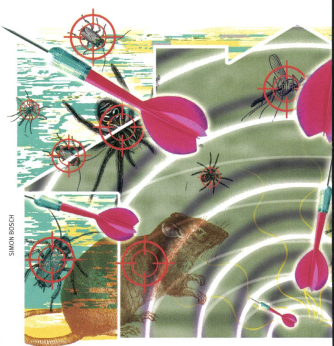
VALE

Suzanne Russell

Australian Consumers' Association Life Member, Suzanne Russell, tragically passed away after an accident on May 22, 2004, aged 64.

Suzanne had been a dedicated defender of consumer rights for decades. She was first elected to ACA's Council in 1974 and became chair in November 1994, retiring from the council in November 1998. Suzanne was a member of the National Consumer Affairs Advisory Council and the Council of Standards Australia; she was also very active in her home state of Victoria, being chair of the Consumers' Association of Victoria and of the Consumer Law Centre Victoria.

She will be sadly missed by all the Australian consumer movement and ACA expresses its sincere condolences to Suzanne's family.



SIMON BOSCH

CORRECTIONS

CAR REPAIR COSTS

CHOICE, May 2004

On page 35 the legend to the car repair costs table indicates that ticks show an increase in repair costs while crosses show a decrease. This was of course meant to be the other way round.

WASHING MACHINES

CHOICE, March 2004

On page 44 we said the **WESTINGHOUSE LT809S Complete Care** has a capacity of 9.5 kg. In fact its capacity is 8 kg, as we correctly reported in the table on page 47.

CHOICE CUTS

CHOICE, June 2004

On page 5, under 'Update', we published the web address for **DEAD END MATS** for killing cockroaches. Unfortunately gremlins got into the works at the last moment; the correct address (with no spaces) is www.deadendcockroachmats.com

RF

Toothbrush tips

A systematic review of research comparing manual and electric toothbrushes, published in the *Journal of Dentistry*, has found that electric toothbrushes are at least as effective as manual ones at reducing plaque and gum disease.

The July issue of CHOICE *Health Reader* reports that Scottish researchers looked at 40 years of research, including 29 trials involving more than 2000 people, and found that one type of electric toothbrush in particular removed plaque and reduced gingivitis more effectively than manual brushes in both the short and long term. They were rotation oscillation brushes, where the head of the toothbrush rotates first one way and then the other.

While using a manual toothbrush is still fine for dental health, electric toothbrushes may be useful for people who don't have much strength, such as small children or the elderly, or as an incentive to children not interested in cleaning their teeth, who might find an electric toothbrush a novelty. Look out for a trial of electric toothbrushes coming up in CHOICE.

Also in July *Health Reader*:

- The best treatment for bedwetting is an alarm, according to researchers who reviewed the results of 53 clinical trials. The alarms — mostly audio alarms that go off when they detect moisture — are effective when used properly for three out of four children who bedwet .
- COACH, a program developed in Melbourne to tackle heart disease, proved very successful in its pilot run. People with coronary heart disease were 'coached' to achieve health and lifestyle goals in conjunction with their normal medical treatment. Those on the program showed greater reductions in cholesterol and blood pressure than those receiving standard medical care alone. They also had improved diets, were more physically active and reported a better quality of life. COACH is now being rolled out as standard treatment for many patients discharged from cardiology wards in the Melbourne area.

If you'd like to subscribe to CHOICE *Health Reader*, call 1800 069 552 or go to www.choice.com.au/magazines.

Refunds for electronic pest repellents

We told you three years ago that electronic pest repellents don't work; now it's official. And if you bought one from the **DANOZ** group of companies, you could get a refund.

In March the ACCC found that **DANOZ** couldn't substantiate its claims about the efficacy of its **PEST CONTRO** or **PEST DEFENSE** devices, and they were therefore false and misleading. These devices plug into a 240 V power socket and are claimed to repel insect and rodent pests through ultrasonic or electromagnetic pulsations, but the ACCC found little evidence that they work as claimed.

Among other court-enforceable undertakings to the ACCC, **DANOZ** agreed to stop making such claims and offer refunds to customers who bought the product after July 1997 and who believe they were misled by the claims.

This wasn't the first action the ACCC's taken on this issue. In May last year we reported it had taken **PEST FREE AUSTRALIA** to court over misleading claims about its **PLUG IN PEST FREE** electronic device. And it's probably not the last we'll hear.

The ACCC is aware of similar products on the market and is concerned about some of the claims being made. "Sellers of these devices should exercise due diligence to ensure that any claims they make about the operation or efficacy of these devices have a sound basis in fact," said ACCC Chairman Graeme Samuel.

APPLIANCE RELIABILITY SURVEY WINNER

More than 16,000 subscribers returned their appliance reliability surveys, telling us whether they'd had problems or repairs in the past 12 months for eight different household appliances. Look out for the results in an issue later this year.

All respondents went into a draw to win a **PANASONIC NV-DS65** digital camcorder, and the winner is Scott Grimmatt from Queensland.

The survey was distributed to approximately 60,000 subscribers with the March 2004 issue. Thank you to everyone who filled it in, and congratulations to Scott.

YAMAHA GRAHAM

More shonky investment seminars

The Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) recently acted against investment training company Forex Pacific. It teaches foreign exchange trading using software from an American company, US Capital. However, Forex Pacific doesn't have an Australian Financial Services Licence (AFSL), which means it isn't authorised to give financial product advice or arrange for consumers to deal in financial products. Nevertheless, this is what it was doing.

In addition, Forex Pacific didn't tell clients it received a fee from US Capital for each trade they made through it. As a result of ASIC's action, the company will refund all fees it received if a client requests it.

ASIC recommends taking the following steps before paying thousands of dollars for investment training or software:

- Is trading right for you? Do you have the time to thoroughly research and understand financial markets and monitor your trades?
- Check the trainers' experience and qualifications — have they worked for a reputable financial institution?
- Check the company holds an AFSL. Ask to see a copy or search ASIC's register: go to www.fido.asic.gov.au and type 'AFS licence' in the search box, or call the ASIC Infoline on 1300 300 630.
- Ask if the company receives commissions or fees from another company for trades made through it or for recommending its investment software/training programs. It should disclose this in its financial services guide (FSG) or product disclosure statement (PDS), which by law it has to give you.

Can you help?

CHOICE *Money & Rights* magazine is looking into share trading education and software and would like to hear from you if you've been involved with any. Have you attended share trading seminars or training? Have you used trading software? If you have an experience you'd like to share, email us by August 15 at **sharetrading@choice.com.au**, fax (02) 9577 3377 or write to **Share trading**, CHOICE *Money & Rights*, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204. Thanks for your help.

Bad news for GM food

A recent *New Scientist* report about Argentina's agricultural and environmental crisis holds a worrying lesson for the rest of the world — particularly the developing world — about the impacts of genetically modified food crops.

It says, after eight years of large-scale cropping of Monsanto's **ROUNDUP READY** soy beans (soy beans genetically engineered to be resistant to Monsanto's herbicide **ROUNDUP**), damaging and possibly irreversible effects are becoming increasingly evident:

- Weeds resistant to glyphosate (the chemical name of **ROUNDUP**) have increased in abundance, and farmers have to use stronger herbicides to control them. Agronomists fear glyphosate resistance will transfer to other weed species, creating 'superweeds'.
- GM soy itself is becoming a weed, with stronger and more harmful herbicides needed to control stray plants.
- Farmers growing GM soy are applying more than twice as much herbicide as conventional soy farmers.
- Careless and excessive spraying of a mix of powerful herbicides has killed non-resistant crops on neighbouring farms, also killing and maiming farm animals and causing health problems for humans.
- Soil microbiology has been affected — essential bacteria normally present are declining, and in some places dead weeds lying on the ground don't even rot.

However, one scientist from the country's National Institute of Agricultural Technology reckons the problem is that soy has become a monoculture, not that it's GM. For this, the lack of government direction and control, leaving market forces to dictate farming practices, has been blamed. So it's not unlikely similar problems will emerge in other countries with a *laissez-faire* approach to agriculture.

In local news, NSW, SA, Tasmania, Victoria and WA have effectively banned or placed moratoria on commercial plantings (though not necessarily trials) of GM canola crops — despite the plantings having been given the go-ahead by the Federal Office of the Gene Technology Regulator. (The climate in Queensland and the NT isn't suitable for growing canola.)

Monsanto has now announced it's giving up attempts to grow GM canola in Australia because of restrictive trial conditions and inconsistency between state GM laws. BayerCrop Science has also decided to withdraw from planned trials in NSW, but trials in SA and Victoria appear to be going ahead.

In other news:

- The US is demanding Europe pay over $US1.8 billion in compensation for loss of exports due to its GM ban. The US claims the EU placed a moratorium on GM products without any scientific evidence, which is against World Trade Organisation free-trade rules. The fact that European consumers don't want to buy GM food is apparently irrelevant.
- Monsanto has abandoned plans to introduce its **ROUNDUP READY** wheat, due to fears that European resistance to GM crops would destroy US and Canadian wheat export markets if Europe turned to other producers.
- Applications for trials of GM crops in the UK have declined from 159 in 2000–01, to 140 in 2001–02, 42 in 2002–03 and only one this year. Could the sun be setting on what the Blair government regards as a 'sunrise industry'?

yourletters

TAMARA GRAHAM

Ring of confidence

Several years ago my fiancé and I bought a diamond engagement ring. We did our homework on diamond cut, clarity and colour, chose a ring with diamonds of a certain quality and purchased from a reputable jeweller. We relied heavily on the National Council of Jewellery Valuers independent valuation that the jeweller provided for us.

Four years later, having moved interstate, we updated our insurance policy, which required another valuation. This valuation (which we queried twice) was significantly different from the first (half the original amount we paid). We were told the diamonds in the ring were below the size that could be accurately graded, and that the total diamond weight was 0.1 ct less than had been originally appraised (significant when the total diamond weight was less than 0.5 ct).

How independent are these 'independent' jewellery valuations and is it feasible when buying jewellery to have another valuation done, using a valuer of your own choosing?

Nicole Newcombe
Waterford, WA

Legally anyone can give a valuation for a diamond ring. Registration with the National Council of Jewellery Valuers is an indication the valuer has maintained their training and education to its standards, but it doesn't guarantee independence. Some valuers are independent and own their own labs, some are employed by the store and some may be store owners. It's worth asking the store what its relationship with the valuer is. You can pay for another valuer to assess the ring, but all valuers are expected to act ethically and if they fail to do so the Council can cancel their registration.

Because valuations are based on the local market, values given can vary from state to state or even different areas in the same city. The original valuer may have also had access to the diamonds before they were set and could give a better assessment of the weight. Theoretically there's no limit to the size of stone that can be graded, but in practice most valuers regard fully grading very small stones as impractical when the overall dollar value between them is minimal.

Valuations are also only comparable for the same purpose, such as replacement value for insurance purposes vs a valuation used to promote a sale.

But while two valuations are unlikely to be exactly the same, the National Council of Jewellery Valuers agrees the discrepancy here seems too large. Where there's a difference of more than 10% it's worth approaching the Council in your state for advice and asking it to give a professional opinion on each valuation and the ring.

Try before you buy

In your Jan/Feb 2004 issue you published a letter from a subscriber about losing photos taken with a digital camera.

I would like to emphasise the importance of 'trying' digital cameras before you buy, including taking some test photos and deleting them, even if you have to annoy the shop assistant to do so. A camera needs a memory card and charged battery for you to do this. I did and I was astounded by how easy it is to accidentally delete photos on some models. This isn't helped by the difficulty in reading the small print and icons in the menus on some cameras. As a result I passed over my original No 1 preference and bought No 2.

Digital cameras are complex gadgets and what look like comparable models may operate quite differently in practice. At the end of the day, the number of megapixels doesn't matter if the photos aren't there!

Mark Robinson,
Bellevue Hill, NSW

THUMBS UP!

Sondra Roberts, via email, gives a big thumbs-up to Zen Imports. Sondra gave her husband a **LEATHERMAN** tool nine years ago. It never leaves his side and is in constant use around the farm. Recently she sent it back to Zen Imports for repairs to two blades and the awl end. Not only was the tool repaired promptly, but other parts that were worn were replaced as well, and it was returned cleaned and polished at no expense.

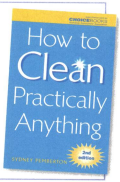
Colin Consiglio from Victoria gives a thumbs-up to **CALIDAD** and **KMART**. On installing a **CALIDAD** ink cartridge for his printer, he found it leaked. He returned it to **KMART** in Melton, which promptly refunded his money. Colin also contacted **CALIDAD**, which sent him a new cartridge.

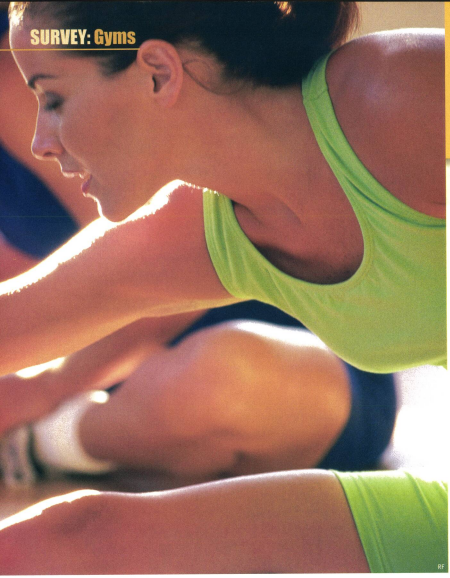
LETTER OF THE MONTH

We want to hear from you — your experiences help our research and often let other readers know about scams and rip-offs. Positive outcomes you've had or a complaint you took to a manufacturer, retailer, importer or tradesperson interest us too. Address these letters to *Thumbs up* at the address on page 2.

To thank you for writing to us, *Your Letters* awards a prize of a CHOICE book to the 'Letter of the month'. This month's winner, Nicole Newcombe of Waterford, WA, receives *How to clean practically anything*, or any other book of her choice from Consumer Bookshelf, pages 47–48.

We're sorry we don't have the resources to answer all your letters personally, and in the magazine we may edit them or print only an extract. See page 2 for how to reach us.





GYMS: IT'S A

IN A NUTSHELL

Some people raved *about the staff and services at their gym, and about its positive impact on their health and lifestyle. Others thought their gym was more focused on making money than helping members.*

The quality of service, *facilities and staff seems to vary a great deal within the industry — see* Every figure tells a story, *far right, for an overview. So know your rights and shop around before joining up.*

Earlier this year, the Victorian Minister of Consumer Affairs issued a warning to examine gym contracts carefully before signing up. This was a response to a 32% increase in the number of complaints received by Consumer Affairs Victoria about gyms and the fitness industry.

Interested in discovering the scope and prevalence of consumer issues with regard to gyms, CHOICE conducted an Australia-wide online survey (see *Touching a nerve?*, far right). We wanted to see if there were any areas of gym membership where particularly good or bad practices were prevalent, and to alert consumers to what to look for when joining.

Of the 948 survey respondents, the majority were happy with their gym and hadn't had any problems. However, a significant minority reported negative experiences, in particular high-pressure sales tactics, staff more interested in making money than providing instruction and advice, and neglect of medical risk responsibilities.

Here are the highlights of our findings, and tips on how to get the most out of your gym membership.

JOINING UP

"They gave me a tour and all the information and left it to me to make a decision whenever I was ready. I was welcome to ask any questions at any time, and to inspect facilities again if I needed to. It was all very relaxed."

In an ideal world — one where all gyms follow the guidelines in their state's code of practice (see page 12) — all signing-up experiences would be like this. However, our survey findings suggest the real world's very different.

A common complaint (14% of members in our survey) was that they were induced by special offers and an invitation to inspect facilities, then felt pressured to sign up. This figure increased to over 30% among members of two gym chains, **FITNESS FIRST** and **FERNWOOD** (see *Gym chains*, page 13, for more on **FITNESS FIRST** and **FERNWOOD**).

Most codes of practice say gyms shouldn't use high-pressure tactics, harassment or coercion to get people to join up. However, exactly what constitutes 'high pressure', etc, may largely be a matter of interpretation.

Not being offered a monthly payment option (8%) and being offered a chance to pay upfront fees for a membership longer than one year (7%) are also potential breaches of the codes of practice.

Other complaints included not being made aware of the full price of services offered (8%), feeling misled about the services and facilities on offer (6%) and feeling misled by special offers as to the true cost of membership (5%).

All in all, 31% of gym members in our survey felt they had experienced some form of unfair or high-pressure sales tactics when signing up.

What to look out for

- Don't succumb to high-pressure sales tactics. Take your time to look around, consider the membership options on offer, and check out other gyms.
- Don't be swayed by special offers available for 'today only'. Chances are, if you go back after you've thought about it, the offer will still stand.
- Ask questions before you sign anything. If they're not interested in helping you during the money-extraction phase, they're even less likely to want to help you achieve your health and fitness goals after you've joined.

JUNGLE OUT THERE ...

... and our survey discovered plenty of pitfalls for the unwary.

- Know your rights — familiarise yourself with your state's code of practice before joining (see *How fit's the industry?*, page 12).

MEDICAL MATTERS

- *"During my medical screening my blood pressure was taken and was very high. The gym wouldn't proceed with my membership until I'd sought advice from a doctor. After taking medication, it was low enough to satisfy the gym's requirements, and so my membership started. If I hadn't done the medical, I probably wouldn't have found out about my condition for some time."*

All codes of practice require gyms to screen potential members for pre-existing medical conditions that might put them at risk during exercise. 20% of respondents weren't asked to fill in a medical questionnaire — which would be the ideal way of screening for potential problems — although they may have been verbally screened. Among those who indicated they did have a medical risk, it was essentially ignored in 18% of cases, with no further questions asked.

What to look out for

- It's in your interests, as well as the gym's, to alert them about any health issues such as high blood pressure, previous or current injuries, pregnancy and so on. A formal questionnaire and basic medical check-up is ideal, but if it's not offered, volunteer any potential problems.
- When signing the contract, make sure you're clear on your rights regarding suspension or termination of the membership due to illness or injury (see *Terms and conditions*, page 11).

ON THE FLOOR

- *"It's pretty much every man for himself — they don't offer to assess your fitness levels, demonstrate the equipment or devise a program for you unless you're willing to fork out extra for a personal trainer."*
- *"In my experience they never have people patrolling the gym to make sure people are doing the exercises/weights properly and safely."*

One of the key objectives in most codes of practice is to provide a standard of service that protects the health and well-being of clients. To us this suggests ensuring members know how to use equipment safely and effectively; having trained staff supervising workouts and offering advice to members where appropriate; and helping members achieve their goals.

While most people were happy with the fitness advice and instruction provided, a significant minority felt it didn't meet expectations:

- 22% weren't shown how to use gym equipment.
- 36% weren't advised on an appropriate exercise program.
- 39% weren't offered a fitness assessment.

There are plenty of gym veterans who know what they're doing and are happy to rock up, do their thing and mind their own business. But for people new to the gym scene — or even new to exercise — instruction and advice are especially important. And when you've already paid a lot for membership, to then discover you have to pay more for a personal trainer to guide you (as happened to several survey respondents), the temptation may be to go ahead on your own, risking injury and perhaps not getting as much out of it as you could.

A significant issue for many was that rather than having staff available for general supervision and advice, the floor staff are apparently more interested in touting for their personal training businesses than giving advice:

- *"The only time I was approached by a staff member offering me assistance was when he had an*

EVERY FIGURE TELLS A STORY

Experiences reported in our survey:

- *Not informed of eligible discounts: 10%*
- *Not given a medical questionnaire to fill in: 20%*
- *Not shown how to use gym equipment: 22%*
- *Not advised on an appropriate exercise program: 36%*
- *Not offered a fitness assessment: 39%*

Touching a nerve?

Within days of the gym questionnaire appearing on our website, we received a letter from Ian Grainger, the CEO of Fitness Australia (see *How fit's the industry?*, page 12), who was concerned that the questionnaire emphasised negative, rather than positive, aspects of gym membership.

We considered his arguments and looked again at our survey, but concluded it was well-designed for the purposes of our investigation: we wanted to be able to report the potential pitfalls of gym membership so that consumers can be more aware of what to look out for when joining one, and highlight the differences between good and bad gym service. We provided plenty of opportunities for people to add positive comments — which they did.

For as we expected, the majority of the 948 respondents were happy with their gyms, and hadn't experienced any serious problems.

However, as this article shows, a significant minority of people also had negative experiences. We hope Fitness Australia will use our findings to improve areas in its industry that can be seen to be less than top-quality.

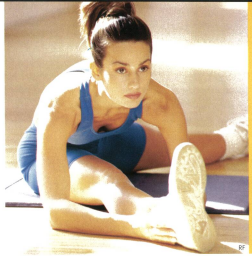
JOINING A GYM COULD BE THIS GOOD ....

Megan Mackinney of Brisbane has been a member of her gym for over a year now, and is very happy with the staff, the environment and the financial side of things.

"I was given the opportunity to join on a month-by-month basis, with no cancellation fee. They also reduced the $150 joining fee to $50 as part of a special offer.

"The monthly fee was gradually reduced each month that I stayed a member. When I was satisfied that I'd continue to use the gym, I signed up for a year and was offered an extra month free of charge.

"I was very pleased to have these options, as I've never been a gym member before and it allowed me to see if I liked the gym and develop a routine before committing to a full year."



ulterior motive — trying to sell me personal training at additional cost."

What to look out for

Before signing up, be very clear about what services are included in the membership:

- Are fitness assessments included? Free or an extra charge? How many and how often? What do they involve?
- Does the gym provide you with a program to help you meet your health and fitness goals? Are there any costs involved? How often is it revised?
- Are you shown how to use equipment? Is this included in your joining fee, or do you have to pay extra? Can it be spread out over several sessions if you're new to gyms?

THE GYM ENVIRONMENT

Most people were happy with their gym's atmosphere and culture, but some of the following comments give you an idea of aspects to check when you're shopping around.

- *"I'm very happy with my current gym. It has a very relaxed, friendly atmosphere, with all shapes and sizes feeling welcome and comfortable training there."*
- *"Music too loud, and caters for the under 20s — who are also very beautiful."*
- *"I find it annoying that there are lots of guys who swear and make a noise as they lift weights."*
- *"I often find the aerobics classes are too full, especially when a new routine is introduced."*
- *"Showers and change rooms are appalling — no space to hang towel at shower, no shelves in showers, often no hot water."*

As many of our respondents noted, the atmosphere and clientele of a gym can make a big difference to your comfort and enjoyment — and hence how much value you'll get from the gym. It may help to visit at a time you're likely to be attending (lunchtime, after work, Sunday mornings, whenever) and check out the scene.

What to look out for

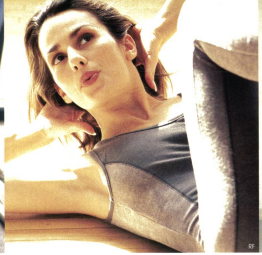
- Is it very crowded? Are classes heavily subscribed? Are there queues for equipment?
- Is the ambience (music, lighting, TV monitors, etc) to your liking?
- Will you feel comfortable among the clientele?
- Check out the atmosphere: hot and sweaty, stuffy, air-conditioned, open windows onto heavily trafficked streets, airy and spacious?
- Is the equipment clean and well-maintained? Are towels required when working out (and is it enforced)? What are the showers and change rooms like?
- Is drinking water available on the gym floor?
- If relevant to you, does the gym offer childcare? What are the hours, and how much does it cost? Can you book in advance?

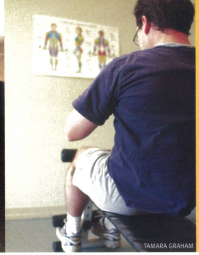
WHEN 12 MONTHS BECOME 13...

- *"I asked for a 12-month contract and it wasn't explained that at the end of 12 months I would have to give a month's notice to cancel the membership. I ended up paying for an additional four months because I didn't check my credit card statement properly. My previous gym sent me letters to find out where I was if I hadn't been in for a week!"*

A small number of people in our survey (3%) complained about money continuing to be debited from their account after they'd stopped going to the gym. Consumer affairs and fair trading departments in Queensland and Victoria have also publicised this issue, with many cases coming to them every year.

The problem arises when people sign what they believe is a 12-month contract, and assume (quite reasonably) that at the end of 12 months they





stop going and stop paying, unless they choose to renew the contract.

In the fine print, however, it's usually stated that you have to give written notice (say one month) of your intention to discontinue membership and to stop payments being debited from your account.

So don't automatically assume that at the end of 12 months (or however long you've signed up for) your time is up. If you're fortunate enough to be with a gym that gives you a friendly prod if you haven't turned up for a while, you're less likely to get caught unawares.

We'd like to see universal adoption of the 'ongoing agreement' policy in the Queensland code of practice: members must be alerted in writing two months before their initial sign-up period is due to end, and warned that membership (and by implication the direct debit) will continue after this time unless the member terminates the membership agreement.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

▮ *"I was refused an extension on my membership, having not been there for two weeks due to an injured ankle. They said I was meant to tell them in advance. So I said, next time I should ring up the day before and tell you I'm going to hurt my ankle, and in all seriousness he said yes! As it turns out, if I'd told them when I did get hurt I would have got an extension, but I didn't tell them until I went back when my ankle was better."*

Most people felt the terms and conditions of their membership were reasonable — although a large proportion weren't able to tell us because they didn't actually know what their conditions were. Obviously it's in your interests to be aware of what you're signing up for, so that if issues come up with your membership you know where you stand.

What to look out for

Here's a list of terms and conditions you should check on the contract:

Fees

- Initial joining fee.
- Direct debit service set-up fees.
- Membership fees and frequency of payment.
- Any additional fees required for each visit.
- Fees for fitness services (fitness assessments, sessions with personal trainers).
- Any other fees for which you may be liable.

Suspending membership

- Circumstances under which you may suspend your membership (such as illness, injury or holiday).
- Annual allowances (how many weeks per year you're allowed 'off'), and the minimum and maximum time periods allowed (for example, there may be a two-week minimum in one block).
- Amount of advance notice required.
- Any fees payable.

Transferring membership to another gym or to another person

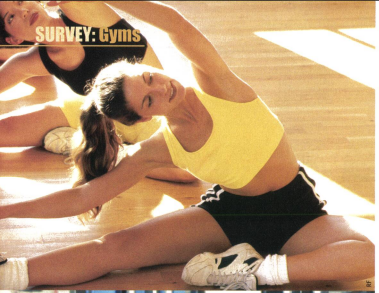
- Circumstances (if any) under which you may transfer your membership.
- Amount of notice required.
- Other requirements on your part.
- Any fees payable.

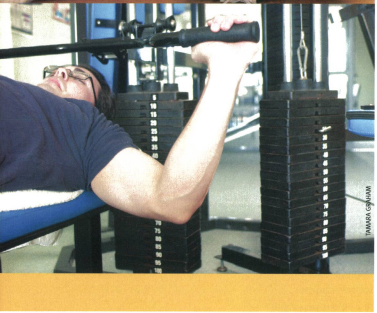
... OR IT COULD BE THIS BAD

Michael of Sydney had problems with his gym from go to whoa. "No orientation was included (as in showing you how to use the equipment and showing you around the facilities) when joining. If you wanted someone to show you around you had to pay for a minimum three sessions with a personal trainer. The additional cost was $70 an hour or $60 an hour for 10 sessions if paid upfront."

Michael says the service provided was worthwhile in the long run but it wasn't exactly smooth sailing: "The personal trainer was unreliable and wasn't prepared to train early in the morning when it was convenient for me — and consequently wouldn't turn up.

"I wrote to request my membership be cancelled, but it wasn't cancelled until one month after the request. So they still got another month out of me, despite the fact that I hadn't been for the last three months."





Terminating membership

- Circumstances under which you may terminate your membership.
- How you go about it.
- Amount of notice required.
- Fees payable if the membership is terminated due to sickness or disability.
- Fees payable if the membership is terminated for other reasons.
- Circumstances under which the gym may terminate your membership.

Cooling-off period after signing up

(That is, a chance to change your mind and get your money back.)

- Required in Queensland and the ACT, and required for code of practice signatories in NSW, SA and Victoria.
- Length of the cooling-off period.
- How to go about cancelling if you do change your mind.
- Fees payable.
- How any refund (minus fees payable) will be paid.

DOES A CODE OF PRACTICE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Most states and the ACT have a code of practice for the fitness industry. In WA the code has been drafted and endorsed by the relevant bodies, and is awaiting consideration by parliament. In the ACT and Queensland all gyms must be signatories to these codes; in other states it's voluntary.

The codes of practice have policies in place that aim to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of clients; appropriate trading standards (including marketing practices) within the industry; and that adequate complaints resolution procedures are available.

While you might think that joining a gym that complies with the state's code of practice would be some guarantee of standards, it's not necessarily the case: we received many complaints about

How fit's the industry?

Fitness Australia is the representative body for the fitness industry in Australia. A gym displaying a Fitness Australia Recognised Provider sign indicates it's a member of its state industry association and should meet minimum national standards for service quality and consumer protection. Each state and territory has its own body (except the NT, where it's coming), which reports to Fitness Australia.

If you have a complaint that can't be resolved with your gym's management, take it to the state's Fitness Association. If you get no joy there, go to your state's department of consumer affairs or fair trading.

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

Gym and fitness staff can be qualified as fitness instructors or fitness trainers.

- **Fitness instructors** require a Certificate III in fitness from the National Fitness Training package, and specialise in leading aerobics or aqua classes, or being a gym instructor.
- **Fitness trainers** require Certificate IV in fitness, and specialise in personal training or training specific populations (such as older adults or people with a disability).

An industry-approved first-aid certificate is also required for both levels.

Unfortunately many people who claim to be 'personal trainers' haven't in fact completed Certificate IV — up to 30%, according to Fitness Australia. You can check that gym staff members are qualified as Fitness Australia professionals — they have an ID card. However, not all qualified gym staff choose to register with Fitness Australia — it estimates only about 60% do. While non-registered personal trainers are unlikely to carry a diploma around with them, you can at least ask about qualifications and use your discretion.

CONTACTS

You can access codes of practice for the ACT, NSW, Queensland, SA and Victoria through their state fitness body's website; contact details and (where available) web addresses for all the state bodies are provided on the Fitness Australia website, www.fitnessaustralia.com.au. Most state organisations are called Fitness Victoria, Fitness Tasmania, etc, though in SA the relevant organisation is Recreation South Australia.

such gyms. On the other hand, there's some indication that the codes may be helping. For example, in Queensland, where the code is mandatory, only 20% of people experienced misleading and unfair sales tactics (described in *Joining up*, page 8), compared with the national average of 31%.

See *How fit's the industry?*, below, for how to get hold of your state's code of practice.

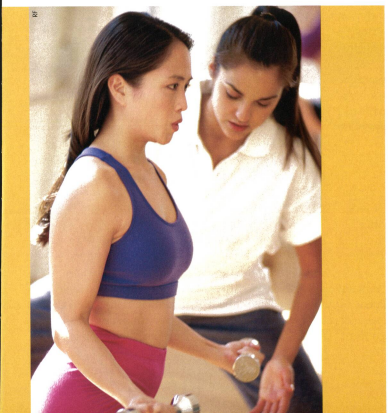
IS A GYM FOR YOU?

"During my membership I have achieved my desired weight loss of 13 kg, my blood pressure has returned to better than normal and my resting pulse compares with a person half my age. Overall I'm a damn sight healthier than I was 13 months ago."

"I think gyms are overrated. I feel I can manage a better program out in the park by myself or with a buddy than in a gym. I only go for classes now."

If you've never been to a gym, it's hard to know if it'll suit you. For some people, it's been a revelation and a joy. For others, there's an initial enthusiasm which gradually wanes, and attending becomes a nuisance and a chore — almost half the people in our survey who'd quit their gym did so because they didn't go often enough to make it worthwhile. For many people, though, a gym is simply part of their regular exercise regimen — a fact of life, rather than fun or torture.

To check out a gym properly, see if you can get a short-term membership (a month, say), try a few casual visits or invest in a multi-visit pass (where you buy a certain number of casual visits at a discount; unfortunately many gyms don't offer them). Given that many people seem to attend their new gym with great enthusiasm for a few weeks or even months, then lose interest, a series of these short-term options may prove the best way to find the right gym for you — and determine your staying power.



Gym chains

Joining a health club chain can be a good idea if you travel around the country, or if it's useful having a branch near home as well as one near work. If this type of flexibility is the main reason for your joining a chain, check the conditions and make sure there's no penalty for using a 'non-home' gym. It's also worth bearing in mind that pricing structures may vary between branches — so it might be cheaper to join at one location and attend another.

Quite a few survey respondents belong to one of Australia's two major health club chains, **FITNESS FIRST** (16% of respondents) and **FERNWOOD** (a women-only gym — 8%), so we can give some detail about experiences with these chains.

FITNESS FIRST

"I was very surprised when I joined this gym that I wasn't given a tour of the facilities and an explanation of how the equipment operated. When I enquired about this, they told me that I'd have to book and pay for a session with one of the gym's personal trainers."

FITNESS FIRST is now the largest health and fitness operator in Australia, with 32 centres throughout the country, and centres in 13 other countries.

It claims it's dedicated to ensuring each member has an exceptional experience on every visit to the club — that they will find comfortable surroundings, inspiring images, friendly staff and members, and the latest in programs and equipment.

We found that compared with other gyms, **FITNESS FIRST** respondents were less likely to have been shown how to use equipment by a qualified staff member, offered a fitness assessment or advised on an appropriate exercise routine.

They were also more likely to report being subjected to high-pressure sales.

FERNWOOD

"The personal trainers at Fernwood are terrific. It's just the day-to-day staff who act like commissioned sales people."

FERNWOOD has 54 clubs throughout Australia and plans to open more. It claims to offer women a safe, secure, supportive environment where they can exercise, slim and learn about good nutrition and weight management.

We found that compared with other gyms, **FERNWOOD** members were more likely to report that staff offer advice and support — most were shown how to use equipment by a qualified staff member and advised on appropriate exercise routines, with staff readily available.

However, like **FITNESS FIRST** members, there were more complaints than average about high-pressure sales.

Should you take the plunge?

Buying your plunger coffee pre-ground from the supermarket can be

IN A NUTSHELL

- **All the supermarket** *plunger coffees scored poorly in our expert taste test, and home trialists rated even the best as just OK.*
- **For a good-quality** *coffee, freshness is vital. Buying freshly roasted coffee beans and grinding them yourself for your plunger may be your best bet if you want an alternative to supermarket coffee.*

Australians love coffee. Supermarkets devote large chunks of their aisles to it, we're particular about the way we drink it, we read about the virtues of it in newspapers, and some of us are even on first-name terms with the barista who makes it at our local cafe. And coffee consumption in Australia is increasing.

When we're not out drinking espressos in cafes, we can choose from the huge range of ground coffees available in supermarkets and enjoy the convenience of making them at home. If you don't want to go the whole hog and buy an espresso machine, you can get espresso-style coffees to use in your plunger, and with names like Prima Blend, Espresso Gold and Prima Qualità, you'd expect them to be pretty good quality. But are they?

We bought 28 supermarket coffees — all espresso, dark roast or Italian-style, suitable for plungers — and asked over 400 subscribers and a panel of experts to taste them (see *What we did*, page 16). The results were disappointing.

AN AVERAGE BUNCH

Even CHOICE subscribers tasting the coffees at home — who don't necessarily have the expertise to pick out specific strengths and weaknesses of a coffee — weren't overly impressed with the samples on test, giving scores ranging from 45% to a pretty ordinary top score of 60%.

And on the whole, the coffees on test did very little for the refined palates of our experts. A comment from one summed up the judging panel's experience: "Some were so poor I'd rather drink instant coffee." The overriding complaint from members of the panel was that many of the coffees tasted stale (see *Fresh is best*, right).

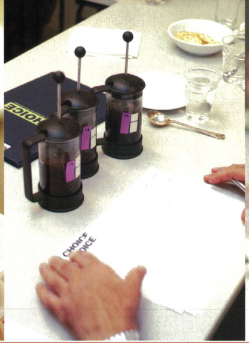
While none of the brands was highly rated, **ANDRONICUS Espresso** and **VITTORIA Natural Decaffeinated Espresso** were the top-scoring coffees in the home trial. **CAFFE AURORA MEDAGLIO D'ORO Espresso** (incidentally, one of the cheapest on test) received the highest overall score — a meagre 36% — from the experts. Both home tasters and experts rated **DOUWE EGBERTS MOCCONA Espresso** second for regular coffee, which was about as close to agreement as the two groups came, suggesting it also might be worth a try.

The amount (or lack) of enthusiasm for the coffees in general can perhaps be summed up by this home taster's lacklustre comment about **ANDRONICUS Espresso**, the best-rated coffee in the home trial: "Quite good — it was pleasant to drink."

CAN DECAF TASTE GOOD?

In both the home trial and the expert taste test, the regular and decaffeinated brands rated very similarly, suggesting that the decaffeination process does little to affect coffee quality and taste. This is good news for anyone trying to cut down the amount of caffeine they drink without forgoing flavour.

VITTORIA Natural Decaffeinated Espresso was rated best of the decafs in the home trial (second by the experts), with the highest score for flavour and aroma, and its overall score was the second highest out of all 28 coffees. A handful of trialists even made specific comments: it was "very smooth and full flavoured", "nice and robust" and "it has left a delicious taste in my mouth".



itter experience ...

Our experts preferred **ILLY Espresso Caffè Decaffeinato Macinato**. But despite giving it top position in the decaffeinated ranks, they still described its flavour as variously "fruity", "musty" and "bland" — certainly not all complimentary.

VALUE FOR MONEY

According to our test results, it's not always the case that the more you pay, the better the quality. Neither of the only two coffees on test that cost under $7 per 500 g (**DELTA CHICCO D'ORO Premium Blend** and **NO FRILLS Espresso**) scored the lowest. In fact from the home trialists' perspective, **NO FRILLS** ranked tenth overall out of the whole sample of 28 coffees. But the same doesn't apply to decaf: the expert's favourite, **ILLY**, costs around $34 for 500 g — the most expensive coffee in the taste test.

FRESH IS BEST

As noted, our experts' main criticism of the plunger coffees on trial was that many tasted stale. This is despite the fact that we took every measure to ensure coffee freshness by only opening the packs, tins or jars for the first time on the day of the test, and measuring out the coffee samples into sealed containers at that time.

However, coffee begins to lose its freshness almost immediately after roasting. Grinding it further exposes the coffee to air, allowing aromas to evaporate. If you don't brew your coffee soon after grinding, it can be bland and lacking in flavour.

The Australian Coffee & Tea Association told us vacuum packing takes place within one hour to one day of grinding, depending on the policy of individual producers. The coffee will continue to deteriorate, but vacuum-packing slows the process. The association also told us coffee packaged in loose packs — such as coffee beans or ground coffee sold in specialty roaster outlets — will deteriorate more quickly than vacuum-packed coffee. So buying coffee from such outlets is no guarantee of freshness either.

Our experts recommend buying freshly roasted beans or fresh-ground coffee in small quantities and using it within a couple of weeks. For the freshest cuppa, grind your beans as close to brewing as possible (CHOICE has a test of coffee grinders coming up soon). In fact our experts' tip is that making your plunger coffee this way will almost certainly give you better coffee even than a home espresso machine used with poor-quality pre-ground coffee — and a grinder will cost a lot less.

DOWN THE PLUGHOLE?

No — don't pour those coffee grounds down the sink. They're organic matter and can harm the environment and corrode sewer pipes as they biodegrade. Bin or compost them instead.

WHAT TO BUY

While the expert advice in the end was to grind your own coffee, if you appreciate the convenience of supermarket pre-ground, try these brands.

PREFERRED BY THE HOME TASTERS

REGULAR COFFEE: **ANDRONICUS Espresso** $12.98*

DECAF: **VITTORIA Natural Decaffeinated Espresso** $16.85*

PREFERRED BY THE EXPERTS

REGULAR COFFEE: **CAFFE AURORA MEDAGLIO D'ORO Espresso** $7.98*

DECAF: **ILLY Espresso Caffè Decaffeinato Macinato** $33.98*

* *Price for 500 g.*

COFFEE AND DIABETES

Several studies have reported that drinking coffee (with caffeine) reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes, though the reasons are still unclear. But sensitive souls will still get all the usual effects of too much caffeine, such as anxiety, heartburn and headaches, so don't let the news make you abandon moderation.

What we did

The home trial: 435 willing subscribers were sent four different brands of coffee in identical airtight jars; they didn't know which brands they were tasting. Around 60 subscribers tasted each brand of coffee. Trialists were given individual plunger cups to make it in, and were asked to try one coffee per day over four days, at the strength and in the manner they'd normally drink it (with or without milk, sugar, etc).

The experts: Our experts, used to dealing with specialty coffees, were asked to taste coffees from supermarkets. Coffee was made in plungers and left to steep for approximately three minutes before plunging. The panel smelt and then tasted the coffee without knowing the brands. They scored the coffees for aroma, body, acidity, flavour and aftertaste, a combination of which gave their overall score — which helps explain why the coffee they liked best for flavour and aroma (**CAFFE KIMBO Aroma Espresso**) wasn't their favourite overall.

In both trials, tasters weren't informed which, if any, of the samples were decaffeinated — the coffees were scored as one whole group. We've separated them in the table because we think most coffee drinkers are interested in just one or the other.

Coffee choices

Roasting brings out the flavour from the raw, bland coffee bean. Unroasted beans boast all coffee's acids, protein and caffeine, but none of its taste. It takes heat to spark the chemical reactions that produce aromatic oils, burn off moisture and carbon dioxide, and alternately break down and build up acids, unlocking the characteristic coffee flavour and aroma.

The coffee aisle in the supermarket can present you with a bewildering array of ground coffees, in a number of styles. To help you choose, the packaging often tells you the strength of the roast, ranging from light through medium to dark. Espresso, or what is sometimes referred to as Italian-style, is the darkest roast. This is the style that dominates the market in Australian supermarkets, and is what we tested.

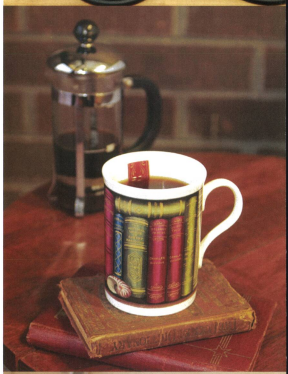
DEFINED BY THE GRIND

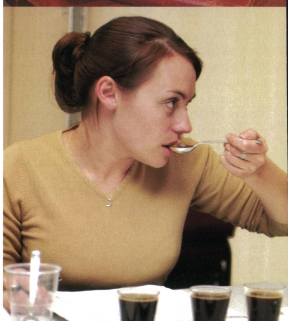
You may have wondered why some coffee packaging says it's suitable for, say, a plunger and not a drip filter, and whether this really matters. These instructions relate to the size of the grind, and in fact it's very important to the flavour of your coffee.

If your coffee tastes bitter, it may be overextracted, meaning the beans were ground too fine and the water was in contact with the coffee for too long. On the other hand, if it tastes bland or weak, it may be underextracted — the grind was too coarse and the water ran straight through it.

Generally, the finer the grind, the more quickly the coffee should be prepared. That's why coffee ground for an espresso machine — where, as the name implies, there's a quick brew time of only 20 to 30 seconds — is much finer than coffee that will be brewed in a slower drip system, for example. And a coffee with a grind suitable for a drip system — where the contact time should be around five minutes — may not taste as good when made in a plunger, where it should steep for around three minutes.

When buying pre-ground coffee, you only have the manufacturers' advice on the packaging as to what kinds of coffee maker it's suitable for. If you buy one and it doesn't taste right to you, try a different style or brand, in case the grind was to blame.





Brand / name (In order of home taster scores)	1 Overall score (%)		1 Flavour score (%)		1 Aroma score (%)		
	Home tasters	Experts	Home tasters	Experts	Home tasters	Experts	2 Price ($)
REGULAR COFFEE							
ANDRONICUS Espresso	60	31	58	33	58	25	12.98
DOUWE EGBERTS MOCCONA Espresso	57	34	55	34	55	35	14.98
HARRIS Espresso 5	57	30	58	31	57	23	8.14
PIAZZA D'ORO Premio	56	27	54	27	55	26	14.98
VITTORIA Italian Blend	56	23	57	23	59	20	8.98
CAFFE KIMBO Aroma Espresso	55	33	54	40	55	36	11.98
LAVAZZA Caffe Espresso	55	27	55	30	59	19	14.58
NO FRILLS Espresso	54	25	54	28	57	21	6.48
MELITTA Italian Gourmet	53	30	52	31	56	30	7.98
HARRIS Black Label 4	52	26	52	27	53	22	12.23
HARRIS Espresso Gold 4	52	30	50	31	55	29	12.45
LAVAZZA Qualità Oro	52	28	51	29	53	24	13.99
CAFFE AURORA MEDAGLIA D'ORO Espresso	51	36	53	35	56	35	7.98
VITTORIA Espresso	51	22	51	23	55	19	10.98
CAFFE AURORA MEDAGLIA D'ORO Prima Qualità	50	21	51	21	54	18	7.45
ILLY Espresso Caffè Macinato	50	32	49	35	50	26	32.50
DELTA CHICCO D'ORO Premium Blend	49	24	48	23	50	27	4.95
UNIVERSAL BRANDS 100% Organic Coffee Espresso	49	32	51	38	56	24	16.22
ALCAFE Dark Roast	48	17	49	19	55	12	7.48
CAFFE AURORA MEDAGLIA D'ORO Italian Style	47	12	47	13	53	11	7.29
SEGAFREDO ZANETTI Espresso Moka	46	13	46	13	52	13	11.00
ROBERT TIMMS Italian Style Espresso	45	30	45	35	50	21	11.53
DECAFFEINATED							
VITTORIA Natural Decaffeinated Espresso	59	24	58	25	60	21	16.85
CAFFE KIMBO Decaffeinato	55	21	56	23	55	20	11.98
HARRIS Decaffeinated 3	53	21	54	21	54	20	13.73
ILLY Espresso Caffè Decaffeinato Macinato	49	27	49	31	51	21	33.98
MELITTA Decaf Classic	49	20	48	20	52	19	7.98
LAVAZZA Caffe Decaffeinato	48	21	47	21	51	20	14.44

Storage tips

Excessive air, moisture, heat and light can all affect coffee quality, causing it to deteriorate. Proper storage is integral to maintaining your coffee's freshness and flavour, so follow these tips to make the most of your purchase.

- Keep coffee grounds in a container with an airtight seal.
- Store the container in a dark and cool location.
- If you've bought a large quantity of coffee that you won't use immediately, small portions wrapped in airtight bags can be stored for up to a month in the freezer and then used promptly (small portions so that you're not constantly taking a large one out and exposing it to air).
- A cupboard near the oven is often too warm, as is a cupboard on an outside wall of your kitchen if it receives heat from strong afternoon or summer sun.

THANKS

We're very grateful to all the subscribers involved in the home trial — thank you.

Thanks also to the nine experts who made up our judging panel — variously coffee roasters, coffee distributors, Royal Agricultural Show Fine Food coffee judges, a barista, representatives of the Australasian Specialty Coffee Association and national barista judges — who had the onerous task of slurping their way through 28 coffee samples.

They were: Gerardo Barrios, Christopher Bonney, Robert Forsyth, Andrew Gross, Peter Maloney, Dean Morgan, Emily Oak, Tony Papas and Keith Pettigrew.

1 Overall/Flavour/Aroma scores
Experts scored the coffees according to the International Cupping Score system on five separate parameters (aroma, body, acidity, flavour and aftertaste). Their overall score is a combination of these five individual scores, all weighted equally. Home tasters scored individual coffees on factors like aroma, body and taste and also gave them an overall score. We converted all scores to percentages.

2 Price
For easy comparison, this is the price for 500 g, based on what we paid in March 2004; the coffees are in fact sold in various sizes.

READER CAR REVIEWS

In the market for a small car? Here's what our readers thought of three popular models.

TAMARA GRAHAM

IN A NUTSHELL

What three small cars *are like to live with — does their day-to-day performance and convenience live up to the marketing promises?*

When looking for a new car, you can do a lot of research yourself before walking into a dealership. The motoring press and especially the internet (for example, the 'cars' section on www.choice.com.au) offer a wide range of information, such as road tests, crash test results and repair costs.

But there are limitations: how well does the car perform in everyday driving situations? How noisy is it, and how easy is it to park? Questions like these can often only be answered after driving the car for a while.

That's why we asked a small panel of CHOICE readers to tell us why they chose a particular model, whether they've had problems with it, its strengths and weaknesses, and whether they consider it good value for money.

Thanks very much to everyone who participated. We received a sufficient number of survey responses to enable us to report on the **HYUNDAI Getz**, **MAZDA 2** and **TOYOTA Echo**.

In a future issue we'll report our readers' views on three popular family sedans.

EXTRA INFO

Take a look at www.choiceextra.com.au. It gives you access to our reliability survey, repair costs and ANCAP safety data. For a limited time it'll also give you access to our new and used car databases, to help you choose a model. Just look under 'cars' in the index.

"It's very zippy, has a roomy and flexible interior, and only uses little petrol. It's just a fantastic car, I haven't found anything wrong with it yet."
Viviene Kohen, Beechboro, WA

STUART ALLEN

Mazda 2

Price range (RRP): $17,490–$23,335
Versions: Neo, Maxx, Genki
Body styles: Five-door hatch
Engine options: 1.5 L
ANCAP* safety rating: ★★★★

* *The Australian New Car Assessment Program crash-tests cars to find out the level of protection they provide to their occupants. The highest rating is five stars. Crash test results are only comparable for cars of similar weight.*

ZIPPY AND FLEXIBLE

Our **MAZDA 2** reviewers bought a mix of Neo and Genki versions, mainly with manual transmission. They were after a reliable, well-built car with low running costs and an appealing body shape. They also considered the **HONDA Jazz** (reviewed in CHOICE in March 2004) and **HYUNDAI Getz**, but the **MAZDA 2** got the nod mainly due to its performance and design. The car met or exceeded owners' expectations.

The reviewers listed its main strengths as zippy performance, flexible interior design, low fuel consumption and easy parking. There were some complaints about interior noise, and individual gripes about the audio system and the Neo's lack of a remote central locking option.

The main optional extras purchased by our reviewers were cruise control, mats, tinted windows, a towbar, and headlight and bonnet protectors. The car achieved a four-star ANCAP rating and most feel safe in it, except perhaps in a crash with a larger car.

Most reviewers consider the car good to very good overall value for money, although some didn't think it was very cheap to buy and run.

"I chose the Getz because it's great value for money, comes with a five-year warranty, and was voted small car of the year. It drives really well and has great standard features like CD/MP3 player and power everything. However, the seats could be more comfortable, and I can't see the front end of the car, which makes parking a bit difficult."

Cath Hughes, Ashfield, NSW

Hyundai Getz

Price range (RRP): $13,490–$17,353
Versions: XL, GL
Body styles: Three-door (XL and GL) and five-door (GL) hatch
Engine options: 1.3 L (XL), 1.5 L (GL)
ANCAP safety rating: ★★★

AWARD WINNER WITH LONG WARRANTY

Most of our **GETZ** reviewers chose the better-equipped GL version and manual transmission. They were looking for a reliable car with a reasonable purchase price and running costs, as well as a good warranty (**HYUNDAI** offers five years) — and that's where they saw the **GETZ** having the edge over other models they considered (the **HONDA Jazz** and **TOYOTA Echo** were mentioned most often). They were also impressed by the standard features in the **GETZ**, and the fact that motoring organisations voted the 1.5 L model Australia's Best Small Car in 2003.

While three cars (out of 19) had to be repaired under warranty, the car met or exceeded the expectations of most of our reviewers. They reckon it's easy to drive and handles well, and has good interior space.

The fuel consumption attracted mixed emotions: some think it's great, others were disappointed — maybe because fuel efficiency is particularly important to owners of small cars, but achieving the claimed figures under everyday driving conditions (especially in city traffic) can be difficult.

There were also some grumbles about limited visibility out of the car, and uncomfortable seats.

As noted, our reviewers thought the **GETZ** came well-equipped, so tinted windows and dashboard, and floormats were the main extras purchased. However, they missed the option of remote central locking and intermittent windscreen wipers.

Most reviewers feel somewhat vulnerable driving a small car like the **GETZ**, and don't think it would offer great protection in a crash — and the three-star ANCAP rating shows they're not entirely wrong.

The car's purchase price and running costs are generally considered low to medium (despite the odd gripes about fuel consumption), making it very good value for money in the eyes of its owners.

Toyota Echo

Price range (RRP): $14,740–$20,240
Versions: 'Standard', Sportivo
Body styles: Three-door (both versions), five-door hatch and sedan ('standard' only)
Engine options: 1.3 L ('standard' three and five-door hatch), 1.5 L (sedan and Sportivo)
ANCAP safety rating: ★★★★

COMPETITIVE PRICE, RELIABLE BRAND

Our **ECHO** reviewers were mainly women, who bought a mix of hatches and sedans, mainly with auto transmission. Getting a reliable car was very important for all of them, together with a reasonable purchase price and running costs, a good warranty, and good safety and security features.

Other models considered included the **HOLDEN Barina**, **HONDA Jazz** and **HYUNDAI Getz**, but the combination of competitive price and **TOYOTA**'s reputation for building reliable cars made the **ECHO** first choice.

There was one repair under warranty (out of 11 cars), and the car has exceeded the expectations of most owners, mainly because of its performance and ease of driving and parking. Some reviewers also praised the car's fuel economy and high seating position. The lack of rear leg room is seen as the main weakness.

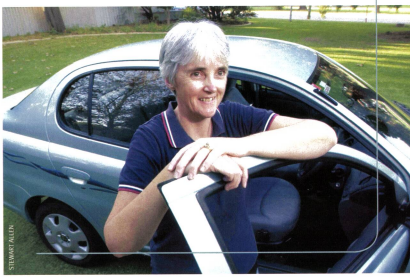
The reviewers didn't find much missing from the **ECHO**'s features list, so tinted windows and fabric protection were the main options purchased.

Some owners have doubts whether such a small car would protect them adequately in a crash. However, the car achieved a four-star ANCAP rating.

The **ECHO** is generally considered very good value for money, despite some reviewers thinking it wasn't very cheap to buy and service.

"I decided on the Echo because of its competitive price and Toyota's reputation for reliability. It's so easy to drive, and very economical. There's nothing I dislike about it."

Sue Lang, Armadale, WA



WHAT'S THAT FISH?

Are you really getting the fish you thought you were buying?

IN A NUTSHELL

- **Fish substitution** *and mislabelling do happen, so a system needs to be put in place to protect consumers from rip-offs and potential health problems.*

When you buy fish you're entitled to expect you're getting what you pay for, but recently there have been reports of fish substitution and incorrect labelling.

A number of states and territories took part in a pilot survey (co-ordinated by the WA health department) to get an idea of the extent of the problem before carrying out a large-scale survey. It focused on two species — barramundi and red emperor. Overall, around 23% (32) of the 138 samples were mislabelled, the worst offenders being restaurants, cafes and takeaway shops, with 36% mislabelled. Supermarkets, fishmongers and wholesalers had around 11% of samples mislabelled.

It's not always easy to correctly identify a fish, and substitution and incorrect labelling can be accidental rather than intentional; we're not suggesting the whole seafood industry is trying to fool consumers. However, the mislabelling is likely to be harming consumer confidence in seafood. It may happen for a number of reasons:

- Fish may be incorrectly identified at capture or wholesale and the incorrect name is carried on and used at the point of sale. Some people working in the industry may not have the expertise or experience to correctly identify species.
- Wholesalers, retailers, fishmongers and restaurateurs could substitute or rename fish species in order to get a better price or to meet consumer demand for a particular species. For example, barramundi is popular here and overseas and the Australian seafood industry struggles to meet demand.
- Supermarkets and fishmongers may use a made-up name or rename the fish to make it sound more appealing to consumers.

IT'S NOT JUST THE MONEY

No-one wants to be ripped off. Yet how many of us could actually tell whether the barramundi we ordered was in fact barramundi and not Nile perch? To the untrained eye and tastebuds they're similar in appearance and flavour, and there's evidence Nile perch has been sold as barramundi. But since Nile perch is half the price, you'd want to be sure you were getting what you'd paid for.

For some vulnerable people, incorrect labelling and substitution can affect their health, not just their hip pocket. For example, our food regulator, FSANZ, recently released information about mercury in fish and advised consumers, particularly children and pregnant woman, to limit their consumption of a small number of species that have higher mercury levels (orange roughy/sea perch, catfish, shark/flake, swordfish, broadbill and marlin — see *Choice Cuts*, May 2004). So if you were pregnant, say, you'd want to be sure fish were labelled correctly — and if you couldn't be, the most sensible course would be not to buy it.

MAKE IT MANDATORY

The Australian Dietary Guidelines encourage us to eat one or two serves of fish a week as part of a healthy diet. So how can you be confident you're not being ripped off and the fish you're buying is the one you asked for?

CHOICE's view is that the food industry should be required by law to label fish correctly, and in fact the Trade Practices Act would seem to protect consumers against mislabelling and substitution. FSANZ and the ACCC have now agreed to work together to address misleading and deceptive practices in the food industry, such as mislabelling.

An Australian Fish Names Committee (yes, really) has long been involved in reviewing the names of seafood species and has developed the Australian Fish Names List; Standards Australia will also now become involved in this. CHOICE wants to see the list incorporated into the Food Standards Code, and many people in the seafood industry are lobbying for this too.

However, until it *is* mandatory our only advice is to find a reputable fishmonger you think you can trust, and if you're not sure what you're getting, don't buy it. ■

A steamy affair

Does more steam give a smoother ironing experience?

PHOTOS: TAMARA GRAHAM

If you've got a large family, do your ironing in bulk and have an area in the house that can be devoted specifically to this chore, it could be well worth splashing out on this Rolls Royce equivalent of the humble household iron. If not, consider carefully before you spend the extra dollars.

Overall, the steam stations ironed better than the conventional iron included in the test for comparison. Our expert testers, who put the steam stations through their paces, were particularly impressed with how effective they were at tackling linen — a fabric that's often a challenge to iron. But they're significantly more expensive — the steam stations in this test cost from $199 to $300, compared with $58 paid for the conventional iron.

And despite the extra steam and better performance, you probably won't get through that pile of ironing any faster using a steam station. We timed how long it took to iron a selection of laundry using both types of iron, and found very little difference. In fact the whole process tends to take even longer with a steam station once you add the heat-up time, which can take up to eight minutes.

Steam stations also tend to be bulky and heavy — the ones in our test weighed around 4 kg even without any water (just the empty station and iron), compared with the 1.2 kg conventional iron. Ideally you'd leave it set up, so you don't need to lug it around or put it away every time you iron.

FULL STEAM AHEAD

The essential difference between a conventional iron and a steam station is the steam output. Even the least powerful steam station produced at least 35% more steam than the iron. And whereas an iron may only hold a few hundred millilitres of water, a steam station may have up to 1 L capacity.

Our expert testers estimated that the steam stations tested could provide around 30 minutes of non-stop steam — or one and a half hours of ironing

IN A NUTSHELL

Steam station irons *do the job well, so if you do a lot of ironing you could find one a good buy.*

As a unit they *tend to be heavy and cumbersome, so are better suited to homes with a dedicated space for ironing, so that you don't have to set it up each time.*

WHAT TO BUY

DELONGHI Stiro Meglio Compact PRO 130	$299
INNOVATIONS Watts Steam Generator (TU-H390) ◀ BEST BUY ▶	$199
SUNBEAM Steam Pro compact SR8200 ◀ BEST BUY ▶	$199
SUNBEAM Steam Pro non-stop SR8500	$299

WHAT'S A STEAM STATION?

Steam stations are made up of two components: a container that holds the water for steam ironing and an iron without a water tank.

The container has a heating element that boils the water and a valve that lets the steam through a hose into the iron. An electric cord for the soleplate and a plastic hose for the steam supply connect the two components. The thermostat for the iron soleplate is located on the iron the same way as for conventional irons, and there's a steam on/off button that you press for steam ironing.

All the irons in the test can be used for dry ironing by not pressing the steam button.

What to look for

- A **thermostat** that's easy to adjust, with clear markings.
- A **comfortable handle** that has enough room for your fingers so you don't bump the thermostat out of position when picking up or putting down the iron.
- A **long cord and steam hose** between the station and the iron, so you can easily reach all areas of the ironing board.
- A **steam button** that's simple to engage/disengage; a **steam lock switch** means you don't have to keep your finger or thumb on the steam button all the time you're using steam to iron.
- Easy-to-use **station controls.**
- A **water tank** that can be filled easily, ideally partway through ironing, without having to release steam pressure first.

using the steam function, according to two of the manufacturers — without needing refilling. This should be more than enough to finish a substantial amount of ironing in one session — you'd probably run out of steam before your iron did.

SAFETY FIRST

Six of the eight models tested have water containers that are under pressure. This means that if the water runs out while you're ironing, you can't fill it up without first switching it off at the power point and allowing time for it to cool down before releasing the pressure in the steam station and undoing the cap. You have to do this slowly and carefully to make sure your fingers don't get burnt.

The **INNOVATIONS** and **SUNBEAM Steam Pro non-stop SR8500** are the only two that can be topped up with water during use, without having to release the pressure first — a feature that our testers preferred. ■

PROFILES Models in the *What to buy* list are profiled. Prices are recommen

DELONGHI STIRO MEGLIO COMPACT PRO 130

Price: $299

GOOD POINTS

- Equal best overall and equal best for ironing performance.
- Excellent at ironing synthetic material, wool, cotton, denim and linen.
- Easiest to use for vertical steaming (such as a jacket or curtains).
- Steam ready indicator.
- Very comfortable handle.
- Steam lock.

BAD POINTS

- No button groove in the soleplate.
- Can't be filled up while ironing without releasing pressure in the tank first.
- No heel — you can't leave the iron resting upright on the ironing board.

INNOVATIONS WATTS STEAM GENERATOR (TU-H390)

Price: $199 BEST BUY

GOOD POINTS

- Equal best overall and equal best for ironing performance.
- Excellent at ironing synthetic material, wool, denim and linen.
- Can be filled with water while ironing without having to release the pressure in the tank first.
- Very good controls.
- Very comfortable handle.
- Fastest heat-up time: 2.5 minutes.
- Steam ready indicator.
- Auto cut-off after 15 minutes without use.

BAD POINTS

- Poor steam control — steam keeps pouring out after you release the button.
- If using tap water, it requires a filter that needs periodic replacement.
- No warranty information.

	PERFORMANCE				4 FEATURES					
Brand / model (in rank order)	**1 Overall score** (%)	**2 Ironing score** (%)	**3 Ease of use score** (%)	**Heat-up time** (min:sec)*	**Soleplate**	**Steam ready indicator**	**Steam lock switch**	**Tap water OK**	**Button groove**	**Refill while ironin**
DELONGHI Stiro Meglio Compact PRO 130	85	92	67	7:00	Aluminium	✓	✓	✓		
INNOVATIONS Watts Steam Generator (TU-H390) **(A)**	85	92	68	2:30	Stainless steel	✓		**(D)**	✓	✓
SUNBEAM Steam Pro compact SR8200	82	90	63	6:30	Stainless steel	✓		✓	✓	
SUNBEAM Steam Pro non-stop SR8500	82	87	70	4:00	Stainless steel	✓		✓	✓	✓
PHILIPS Provapor GC6059	81	85 **(B)**	72	8:00 **(C)**	Stainless steel			✓	✓	
KENWOOD SS481	76	83 **(B)**	60	8:00 **(C)**	Stainless steel		✓	**(E)**	✓	
TEFAL Pressing Profile 2860	74	75 **(B)**	70	6:00	Non-stick	✓		✓	✓	
KENWOOD SS471	71	75 **(B)**	60	8:00 **(C)**	Stainless steel		✓	**(E)**	✓	

ail, as provided by manufacturers in February 2004.

SUNBEAM STEAM PRO COMPACT SR8200

Price: $199 BEST BUY

GOOD POINTS

- Excellent at ironing wool, cotton, denim and linen.
- Equal longest cord from station to iron: 1.9 m.
- Very comfortable handle.
- Steam ready indicator.

BAD POINTS

- Controls on both iron and station are a bit difficult to use.
- Can't be filled up while ironing without releasing pressure in the tank first.
- No heel — you can't leave the iron resting upright on the ironing board.

SUNBEAM STEAM PRO NON-STOP SR8500

Price: $299

GOOD POINTS

- Excellent at ironing wool, denim and linen.
- Can be filled with water while ironing without having to release pressure in the tank first.
- Very comfortable handle.
- Equal longest cord from station to iron: 1.9 m.
- Steam ready indicator.

BAD POINTS

- Controls on both iron and station are a bit difficult to use.
- No heel — you can't leave the iron resting upright on the ironing board.

SPECIFICATIONS

Water low light	Weight empty (iron and tank, kg)	Cord length, station to iron (m)**	Maximum distance from power point (m)**	Warranty (years)	Origin	Manufacturer/ distributor	Price ($)†
	4.2	1.7	4.6	1	Italy	Parex Industries	299
(F)	3.9	1.7	3.5	ns	China	Innovations (A)	199
✓	4.7	1.9	4.5	2	China	Sunbeam	199
✓	4.3	1.9	4.5	2	China	Sunbeam	299
	4.1	1.7	4.7	2	Italy	Philips	249
	4.1	1.4	3.1	1	Italy	Hagemeyer	299
	4.3	1.8	4.6	1	France	Groupe SEB	300
	4.0	1.4	3.1	1	Italy	Hagemeyer	259

What about the rest?

Although the remaining steam stations have overall scores above 70%, all four rated a poor 30% for ironing synthetic material, which is the main reason for their lower performance and overall scores.

The **KENWOOD SS471** and **SS481** both have a short cord from the station to the iron. As a result you have less freedom to move the iron on your ironing board, which can be inconvenient. This brought down the ease of use score for these products.

FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

If you have weak hands or arms, look for a model that can be topped up with water without having to release the pressure first. (The only two in this test are the **INNOVATIONS** and **SUNBEAM Steam Pro non-stop SR8500**.) You need good, strong hand function to tighten the safety cap properly on models where pressure needs to be released.

All other models require that you either empty the water container after use or rinse it periodically. The **INNOVATIONS** is the only model with a removable water container that you can take to the sink to empty or refill. For all other tested models you fill up with a beaker provided, and you'd need to be able to carry the whole station to the sink to empty or rinse.

* *Rounded to the nearest half-minute.*

** *Rounded to the nearest 10 cm.*

† *Prices are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers in February 2004.*

ns *Not stated.*

(A) *Only available through the Innovations catalogue and website.*

(B) *Poor on synthetics, only scored 30%.*

(C) *Not measured, as there's no indicator light, but left for eight minutes, as recommended in the instructions.*

(D) *If using tap water, it requires a filter that needs periodic replacement.*

(E) *Distilled or demineralised water is recommended in the instructions but the manufacturer says tap water is OK.*

(F) *See-through tank.*

1 Overall score
The weightings for ironing performance and ease of use were 70% and 30% respectively.

2 Ironing score
Our experts rated the performance of each steam station when ironing linen, cotton, denim, wool and synthetic materials, as well as vertical steaming (for curtains or suit jackets, say). All aspects were weighted equally.

3 Ease of use score
Our experts looked at handle comfort, cord convenience, steam control, station controls, vertical steaming and filling the water tank. All aspects of ease of use were weighted equally.

4 Features
See *What to look for*, far left, for more on some of these features.

¡Hola!

PASTERNAK

Everything you wanted to know about olives (and even some things you probably didn't) ...

Not so long ago an olive was little more than what you needed to put the finishing touches to a martini. Now most delis and the deli counters of the big supermarkets have impressive displays of loose olives, and on the supermarket shelves we found over 40 different types and brands in jars or tins (see Table 1, right).

TYPES AND VARIETIES

There are basically three types of olive: green, black and Greek-style (most familiar as Kalamata olives). They're picked at different stages of ripeness and processed differently (see *You may not have wanted to know this*, page 26), so it's not surprising they have such different flavours and textures. Most olives on sale here are imported from Spain.

Plain green and stuffed green olives are the most popular, but Kalamata olives are growing in popularity.

OUT OF A JAR OR FROM THE DELI COUNTER?

Olives in jars last for ages on the pantry shelf and they're handy to have for cooking or a pre-dinner nibble. However, our Home Testers didn't rate any of the packaged stuffed olives they tasted for us very highly (see Table 2, page 27). Are the loose olives at your deli or on supermarket deli counters any better?

Most of the deli olives are also imported — they just come out of a bigger tin than the ones on the supermarket shelves. Olives come in various grades: the deli ones can be better quality than the ones in jars, and they're often marinated in oil with herbs and spices. Another difference is that prepackaged olives have been sterilised by heat, which can adversely affect the flavour and texture.

Some of the deli olives are grown here and are therefore likely to be fresher (see *Aussie olives*, page 26). It's also likely to be a matter of personal taste — you may find different marinades or stuffings that you like that aren't available in jars.

On average, though, you pay more for olives from the deli counters. After draining off the brine, olives in jars or tins average about $14 per kilogram. Olives

Continued on page 26

IN A NUTSHELL

- **Where they're from,** *what the different types are, how they're made edible and even how they're stuffed ...*
- **CHOICE Home Testers** *rated prepacked green olives stuffed with pimento. While they didn't like any of them much, two brands may be worth keeping in your cupboard for emergencies — see Table 2, page 27.*
- **One serve of olives** *(about seven of them) can contribute more than 20% of your maximum recommended daily salt intake. You might want to look out for the less salty brands.*

TABLE 1. PREPACKED OLIVES

In order of % olives, within groups

	1 Stated % olives	2 Sodium (% RDI per serve)	Origin	Undrained weight (g)	3 Price per kg drained
WHOLE OLIVES (WITH PIT)					
BI-LO Black olives	64	22	Spain	435	5.93
BI-LO Green olives	64	27	Spain	435	5.57
COLES Campagna black olives	64	27	Spain	435	8.69
COLES Campagna green olives	64	27	Spain	435	9.16
FARMLAND Spanish black olives	64	22	Spain	435	6.18
FARMLAND Spanish green olives	64	27	Spain	435	5.82
ALISA Spanish black olives **(A)**	63	7	Spain	400	7.56
HOME BRAND Black olives	63	9	Spain	450	6.28
HOME BRAND Green olives	63	14	Spain	450	5.68
LA NOVA Black olives **(A)**	63	ns	Spain	400	9.16
ALWAYS FRESH Spanish black olives	62	12	Spain	450	9.82
ALWAYS FRESH Chilli Kalamata olives	60	13	**(E)**	360	17.82
ALWAYS FRESH Kalamata olives	60	12	**(E)**	360	18.29
ALWAYS FRESH Kalamata olives with balsamic vinegar	60	7	**(E)**	360	15.28
GREEN VALLEY Greek Kalamata olives	60	15	Greece	375	14.67
SANDHURST Kalamata olives	60	14	**(F)**	450	11.30
VIVA Australian queen green olives **(B)**	59 **(D)**	21	Australia	320	17.84 **(D)**
VIVA Australian ripe Kalamata olives **(B)**	59 **(D)**	21	Australia	320	17.84 **(D)**
VIVA Australian ripe olives with lemon and garlic **(B)**	59 **(D)**	21	Australia	320	17.84 **(D)**
McILHENNY TABASCO Spanish olives	54	18	Spain	350	27.46
STUFFED OLIVES (C)					
GREEN VALLEY Spanish almond stuffed olives	64	22	Spain	240	21.81
THREE THREES Stuffed Kalamata olives	62	19	**(G)**	375	16.77
THREE THREES Stuffed sweet chilli olives	62	19	**(G)**	375	10.06
FIGARO Stuffed green olives with almonds	60	21	Spain	142	28.12
FIGARO Stuffed green olives with anchovies	60	21	Spain	142	28.12
FIGARO Stuffed green olives with minced pimiento	60	21	Spain	142	28.12
ALWAYS FRESH Spanish anchovy stuffed olives	57	16	Spain	235	18.89
ALWAYS FRESH Spanish natural pimento stuffed olives	57	12	Spain	235	20.53
GREEN VALLEY Spanish lemon stuffed olives	57	18	Spain	375	15.67
ALWAYS FRESH Spanish blue vein cheese stuffed olives	55	11	Spain	235	22.90
ALWAYS FRESH Spanish parmesan cheese stuffed olives	55	13	Spain	235	22.82
ALWAYS FRESH Spanish salmon stuffed olives	55	13	Spain	235	21.28
PITTED OLIVES					
SANDHURST Pitted Kalamata olives	60	15	**(F)**	450	11.30
ALWAYS FRESH Kalamata pitted olives	55	12	**(E)**	200	35.45
GREEN VALLEY Pitted Greek Kalamata olives	53	16	Greece **(H)**	375	15.95
COLES Campagna pitted green olives	51	27	Spain	435	11.76
ALWAYS FRESH Spanish pitted black olives	49	12	Spain	220	20.13
FIGARO Pitted black olives	49	9	Spain	142	32.71
GREEN VALLEY Spanish black pitted olives	45	8	Spain	350	14.41
GREEN VALLEY Spanish pitted olives marinated with herbs	44	18	Spain	350	17.21

(A) *In a tin.*
(B) *In a plastic tub.*
(C) *Table 2 on page 27 lists the olives we tasted.*
(D) *Calculated from the serving size and number of servings given on the nutrition information panel (see below).*
(E) *'Packed in Australia from imported and Australian ingredients'.*
(F) *'Packed in Australia from imported and local ingredients'.*
(G) *'Packed in Australia from imported olives'.*
(H) *Packed in Australia.*

1 Stated percentage of olives

The manufacturer's claimed percentage of olives vs the other contents. Some of the supermarket brands (**BI-LO, FARMLAND, HOME BRAND**) offer good value for money in this respect.

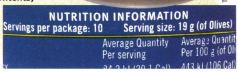
2 Sodium content

This is expressed as a percentage of the maximum recommended daily sodium intake for adults (2300 mg) per 25 g serve (about seven olives).

3 Price per kg drained

This is based on the price we paid in January 2004 and the weight of just the olives.

INGREDIENTS: Australian Premium Green Queen Olives (94%), Salt (5%), Brine, Food Acid (270), Preservative (202, 211)
viva
With Easy Serve Drainer!
Australian Queen Green Olives
TAMARA GRAHAM


NUTRITION INFORMATION
Servings per package: 10
Serving size: 19 g (of Olives)
Average Quantity Per serving
Average Quantity Per 100 g (of Ol

If you look at a label carefully enough you'll see that most manufacturers state the weight of olives in the jar as a percentage of the contents as a whole (see Tables 1 and 2). You might have thought, as we did at first, that with 94% olives and $3.39 for 320 g net weight, the Viva range of olives are great value. But have a look at the nutrition information panel. Apparently you get ten 19 g servings of olives. That's 190 g all up and only 59% of the contents, a long way short of the 94% olives promised in the ingredients list. Viva told us it's changing its labels, but meanwhile the 94% refers to the proportion of "edible content" that's olives — the rest is herbs and spices. As with all whole olives with pits, the so-called 'edible content' includes the pits.

Get stuffed?

Have you ever wondered how the pimento or anchovy gets into the olive?

No, it's not slave labour or trained monkeys but smart machinery that pits and stuffs in one operation. If you have a good look at a stuffed olive you'll see there's a small x-shaped hole at one end and a larger, round hole at the other. The pit's pushed out of the olive by an x-shaped punch, creating the larger, round hole on its way out.

The stuffing's actually pimento or anchovy jelly that's cut into strips and fed into the machine in rolls. There are also machines that'll cut the plug of olive off the pit and reinsert it so that the stuffing can't fall out.

we bought from the deli counters at supermarkets across Sydney averaged about $21 per kilo.

PUT TO THE (TASTE) TEST

We asked 120 CHOICE Home Testers to taste all the brands of green olives stuffed with pimento that we could find in supermarkets nationally — six in all (see Table 2, far right).

Our tasters liked fairly sweet-tasting olives with a fleshy or firm texture; they weren't keen on ones that were bland or tasted bitter or acidic. And they weren't mightily impressed with any of the ones they tasted. Even the marginally most popular, **ALWAYS FRESH Spanish stuffed olives**, scored only 61% overall and were described by one taster as "lacking in taste" and by another as "not very nice". What they really stood out for was their appearance: our tasters were more likely to think them firm and smooth, with fewer than average damaged olives.

ARISTOCRAT Stuffed olives scored nearly as well overall (60%), but were more likely to be described as soft or mushy. And well to the rear with a score of only 41%, **HOYT'S Stuffed olives** were described as dry and as tasting salty and acidic.

AUSSIE OLIVES

Olives grow well in Australia and we have a rapidly growing olive industry, but most of the ones in supermarkets still come from Spain or Greece.

We found one prepacked brand (**VIVA**) with Australian olives, and some of the olives on the supermarket deli counters are locally grown. There are also plenty of small producers who sell olives in local delis and markets — well worth a try when you find them.

The first olives were planted by George Sutter, a free settler, who arrived at Sydney Cove in December 1800. In the 1830s a significant olive industry started to develop in South Australia. But until about 1995–96 the Australian olive industry never developed further because of low consumer demand, high labour costs and cheap imports. Since then the industry has taken off and about nine million trees have been planted. Most of the crop ends up as olive oil.

YOU MAY NOT HAVE WANTED TO KNOW THIS ...

You can't eat olives straight from the tree. They contain a bitter substance called oleuropein that has to be removed by processing. Olives are processed by one of three methods:

- **Green olives** are picked young and soaked first in an alkaline (sodium hydroxide) solution that destroys the oleuropein. They're then washed, transferred to brine (a salt solution) and fermented with lactobacillus bacteria. Finally they're transferred to fresh brine for storage. (It's in this state that they're shipped to Australia.)
- **Black olives** are picked slightly riper, when their colour is just starting to change. Like green olives they're soaked in an alkaline solution, but at the same time they're exposed to air, which causes the fruit to darken in colour. They're then washed and packed in brine for shipping; ferrous gluconate is often added at this stage to further darken the fruit. The method was developed in California, but most Spanish black olives are now processed in the same way.
- **Greek-style olives** are allowed to ripen on the tree before picking. They're dark purple and have more oil than green or other black olives. They're soaked

A DRINK WITH SOMETHING IN IT

There is something about a martini,
A tingle remarkably pleasant;
A yellow, a mellow martini;
I wish I had one at present.
There is something about a martini,
'Ere the dining and dancing begin,
And to tell you the truth,
It is not the vermouth —
I think that perhaps it's the gin.

Ogden Nash

TABLE 2. HOME TESTER RATINGS — STUFFED GREEN OLIVES

	1 Overall score (%)	Stated % olives	Sodium (% RDI per serve)	Origin	Net weight (g)	3 Price per kg drained
ALWAYS FRESH Spanish stuffed olives	61	60	12	Spain	450	8.89
ARISTOCRAT Stuffed olives	60	60	17	**(A)**	275	10.06
THREE THREES Stuffed olives	54	62	13	**(B)**	250	8.90
BI-LO Stuffed green olives	53	64	27	Spain	435	6.79
FARMLAND Spanish stuffed olives	53	64	27	Spain	435	7.04
HOYT'S Stuffed olives	41	62	22	**(C)**	265	11.26

(A) *'Made in Australia from imported olives and local ingredients'. The manufacturer told us the olives are Spanish.*

(B) *'Made in Australia from imported Spanish olives.'*

(C) *'Packed in Australia from local and imported ingredients.' The manufacturer told us the olives are either Greek or Spanish.*

1 Overall score
Our Home Testers' assessment of the stuffed green olives overall, based on the scale: 100% = very good, 50% = OK, 0% = very poor.

in brine and fermented but there's no alkaline treatment (the process relies on the oleuropein leaching out into the brine). After processing, they're often packed in a mixture of brine and vinegar, topped up with olive oil to prevent the olives from floating above the brine. Because they're picked ripe, they have a richer flavour and are more oily than other olives.

TOO SALTY?

Olives generally get a good press as part of the heart-healthy 'Mediterranean diet' — but are they too salty?

Seeing that they're mostly treated with caustic soda (sodium hydroxide) and then cured in brine, it's not surprising olives have a lot of sodium. One 25 g serve (on average, about seven olives) can give you more than 20% of the maximum recommended daily intake for adults (see Table 1). So if you're watching your salt intake and like olives, go for the less salty brands. (If you find any that aren't in our table, look in the nutrition information panel for 'sodium per 100 g' and avoid any with much more than 1000 mg.)

If you buy loose olives, there's no means of knowing how much salt they have.

CHOICE HOME TESTER

Testing the taste

Thanks to the Home Testers who took part in this trial. We sent three different brands of stuffed green olives to each of the 120 trialists; each brand was trialled 55 to 61 times. The labels were covered with black tape so the trialists couldn't recognise the brands.

WHAT TO BUY

ALWAYS FRESH Spanish stuffed olives were the most popular with our Home Testers (although only by a whisker, and 'popular' is something of a misnomer — see Table 2). At around $9 a kilo they're about average in price — and they're the least salty of the ones tasted. If you want some prepacked olives for emergencies, these or the close-second **ARISTOCRAT Stuffed Olives** may be worth a try.

If you're not too keen on stuffed green olives there are plenty of other types available in jars or tins — see Table 1, page 25. Some of the supermarket own-brands (**BI-LO, FARMLAND, HOME BRAND**) are good value for money in terms of the amount of olives you get in the jar.

When Johnny comes marching home ...

... with cuts and grazes, which bandaid gives the best TLC?

IN A NUTSHELL

- **Various products** *by well-known brands such as* ***ELASTOPLAST, BAND-AID*** *and* ***RAPAID*** *were rated top by our Home Testers.*
- **They're not suitable** *for all kinds of wound – see* When to use them, *right.*

The first problem with these 'dressings for minor wounds' is what to call them. Australians call them 'bandaids' — and the *Macquarie Dictionary* acknowledges this as common usage — but it's a brand name. We considered 'adhesive strips', 'adhesive plaster', 'sticking plaster' and the above cumbersome 'dressings…' description, but no-one thought any of them reflected what consumers use and understand. So, with due acknowledgment to Johnson & Johnson's brand **BAND-AID**, from here on we'll behave like normal Aussies and call them 'bandaids'.

According to market research figures, Australians spend around $30 million on them every year, which must reflect a lot of playground and backyard misadventures. But which are best for sticking to the job, water resistance and comfort? To find out, nearly 500 CHOICE Home Testers trialled all the rectangular bandaid strips we could find in supermarkets and pharmacies.

CHOICE HOME TESTER

THE TRIAL

Each of the 487 Home Testers who took part tried three different bandaids. They wore each (on unbroken skin) for 24 hours on the inside of the wrist on which they don't wear their watch. They put them on after a morning shower, and after 24 hours wearing each one they completed a survey assessing its ease of application/removal, level of water resistance, comfort, stickiness and ease of use. Then they rated each one overall. Each was tried by around 60 people, and brand names were disguised.

WHAT TO BUY

The Home Testers rated several **ELASTOPLAST** and **BAND-AID** products highly — in fact these well-known brands fill the top six places in the results table, while two from **RAPAID** weren't far behind. There's a good choice of fabric, clear/transparent, water-resistant/proof and latex-free types in the top eight. ■

Brand (in rank order)	1 Overall score (%)	1 Water resistance score (%)	1 Comfort score (%)
ELASTOPLAST Fabric Strips	80	69	82
BAND-AID Clear	77	75	82
BAND-AID Fabric	77	58	83
BAND-AID Waterblock	76	77	79
ELASTOPLAST Transparent Hypoallergenic Strips	76	75	77
ELASTOPLAST Hypoallergenic Plastic Strips	75	71	80
RAPAID Fabric Plasters Latex Free	74	72	77
RAPAID Waterproof Strips Latex Free	74	72	74
BAND-AID Plastic	71	74	85
RAPAID All-Purpose Plastic Strips Latex Free	71	67	81
HANSAPLAST Plastic Strips	70	70	78
HOME BRAND Plastic Strips Latex Free	70	68	72
NO FRILLS Plastic Strips Latex Free	70	68	74
LITE Non-Allergenic Dressing Strips	65	49	80
ELASTOPLAST Waterproof Strips Latex Free	61	71	74
ELASTOPLAST Aqua Protect Strips	59	70	77
COLES PERSONA Medistrips	58	59	76
BLACK & GOLD Plastic First Aid Strips	57	60	65
ELASTOPLAST Plastic Strips	56	58	75
BI-LO First Aid Strips	55	56	68
ELASTOPLAST Sensitive Strips **(A)**	53	53	76
FIRST-AID Fabric Dressing Strips	48	51	78
BI-LO Plastic Strips	46	41	72

When to use them

Most minor wounds will heal whether covered with a bandaid or not (unless badly infected). However, a bandaid helps control wound ooze and reduces the likelihood of contamination.

They suit small, superficial wounds once any bleeding has been controlled and if any infection present is minor.

Don't use a bandaid on burns, intact blisters, deep wounds where the skin edges don't readily come together or where tendons or other structures may have been damaged, or on any wound where bleeding can't be controlled.

If you have vein problems in your lower legs, artery disease of the legs or diabetes, consult your doctor if you injure your legs (unless the wound is very small). These conditions may mean the wound won't heal, and a chronic leg or foot ulcer could develop.

Type	Price per 100 strips ($)*
Fabric	9.65
Plastic	9.83
Fabric	7.86
Waterproof	11.45
Water-resistant	18.75
Water-resistant	15.63
Fabric	11.90
Waterproof	9.83
Plastic	6.98
Water-resistant	4.95
Water-resistant	16.25
Water-resistant	2.72
Water-resistant	2.72
Plastic	22.00
Waterproof	10.48
Waterproof	17.95
Plastic	2.72
Plastic	2.90
Water-resistant	7.13
Plastic	2.24
Plastic	11.97
Fabric	11.00
Plastic	2.24

* *This is based on the price we paid in February 2004, converted to a price per 100 strips for easier comparison. If bigger packs are available they may work out cheaper.*

(A) *Made by Smith & Nephew; all other Elastoplast products are made by Beiersdorf.*

1 Scores

These are the trialists' averaged scores, converted to percentages. The overall score is a score in its own right, not a combination of others. See *The trial*, far left, for more details on how the Home Testers rated the bandaids.

What to buy

The top eight are pictured below, with a summary of what the Home Testers thought of them.

ELASTOPLAST FABRIC STRIPS

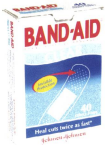
$9.65 per 100*
Overall score: 80%
Voted best overall by a short head, they stuck to the skin well and came loose less often than others, but not surprisingly were harder to remove.

ELASTOPLAST TRANSPARENT HYPOALLERGENIC STRIPS

$18.75 per 100*
Overall score: 76%
Stuck to the skin well, came loose less often and seemed good at stopping water reaching the skin.

BAND-AID CLEAR

$9.83 per 100*
Overall score: 77%
Stuck to the skin well, came loose less often and seemed good at stopping water reaching the skin, but were harder to remove.



ELASTOPLAST HYPOALLERGENIC PLASTIC STRIPS

$15.63 per 100*
Overall score: 75%
They were easy to apply and remove.

BAND-AID FABRIC

$7.86 per 100*
Overall score: 77%
They stuck to the skin well, came loose less often and were comfortable to wear.

RAPAID FABRIC PLASTERS LATEX FREE

$11.90 per 100*
Overall score: 74%
Stuck to the skin well and came loose less often but weren't as easy to remove as some others.

BAND-AID WATERBLOCK

$11.45 per 100*
Overall score: 76%
Easy to apply, stuck to the skin well, seemed good at stopping water reaching the skin but not at letting it breathe.

RAPAID WATERPROOF STRIPS LATEX FREE

$9.83 per 100*
Overall score: 74%
Came loose less often but weren't as easy to remove as some others.

PROFILES: TAMARA GRAHAM

WHAT ABOUT THE REST?

While they only scored around the average mark, **HOME BRAND Plastic Strips Latex Free** and **NO FRILLS Plastic Strips Latex Free** stand out from the others as good value for money — both cost around $2.70 for 100 strips.

Food habits defined

Think your food-buying habits keep you below the advertising radar? Think again. New definitions have been devised to help food companies target people more effectively. After about 55,000 interviews with Australians, the population has been categorised into seven groups, based on their shopping, cooking and eating habits:

- Do you stick to tried and true recipes and products, and tend to spend up big on groceries? You're probably an 'old-fashioned cook', as is 10% of the Australian population.
- If you seek quality in your food, whether you're eating in or dining out, you're most likely a 'trendsetter' (9%) or an 'entertainer' (10%).
- Another group that spends big on groceries, is family-oriented and willing to experiment with new food products and cooking new dishes is the 'house proud' (21%).
- 'Zappits' (17%) reheat pre-prepared foods rather than waste precious time cooking.
- 'Just feed me' (22%) is the group made up primarily of older men who eat what they're given and aren't really interested in how it gets on their plate.
- And the 'take-it-away' group (11%) does just that.

So tune in your ad antenna: there's one out there aimed at you.

Fruitless cordial?

Earlier this year the national food regulator, FSANZ, and the ACCC committed themselves to working together on misleading practices in the food sector. Just days after signing, the ACCC had success in the Federal Court when Cadbury Schweppes was found to have contravened the Trade Practices Act, engaging in false, misleading and deceptive conduct in the labelling of two of its **COTTEE'S** cordial varieties. **COTTEE'S** 'banana mango' cordial and 'apple kiwi' cordial concentrate had pictures of real fruit on the labels, but there was no banana or mango in the banana mango cordial, and no kiwifruit in the apple kiwi variety.

Cadbury Schweppes argued that the phrase 'flavoured cordial' on the label was sufficient to indicate that these cordials were based on fruit flavours rather than real fruit. But the Federal Court agreed with the ACCC that the pictures would give the average consumer the impression that the cordials did contain those fruits.

Cadbury Schweppes no longer manufactures the banana/mango-flavoured cordial and has relabelled the apple kiwi concentrate.

This is the latest in a series of ACCC victories in prosecuting food manufacturers that make false and misleading labelling claims about such things as country of origin and the fruit content of juices. It's great to see the ACCC taking this issue seriously and acting to protect the interests of consumers.

PHOTOS: THINKSTOCK

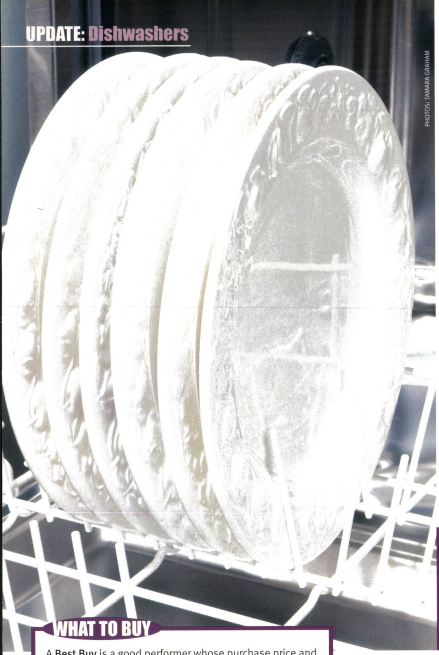
Big fat lies

Following our *Fat refresher course* (CHOICE, March 2004), some readers questioned our advice to replace saturated fats with mono- and polyunsaturates. They'd read books and websites claiming a massive cover-up by the food industry and that saturated oils and fats (particularly coconut oil and butter) are in fact healthier. Is there anything in it or is it just another conspiracy theory?

We've taken a close look at some of this material. None of what we've seen is derived from sound science published in peer-reviewed journals. On the other hand, the evidence that saturated fat is a major cause of heart disease is as strong as it gets.

Coconut oil is widely used in processed foods because it's cheap. (You can also buy it in supermarkets under the brand name **COPHA**.) It in fact contains *more* saturated fat than most other fats and oils, including butter. And the saturated fats in both butter and coconut oil are strongly associated with increased risk of heart disease.

Controversy attracts media attention and sells books. That's why there's no shortage of people willing to create it.



PHOTOS: SAMARA GRAHAM

No need to SPLASH OUT

Don't spend more than you need on your new dishwasher.

IN A NUTSHELL

- **One newly tested model** *worked well enough to make it into our* What to buy *list.*
- **You don't have to** *pay over $1000 to get a machine that's easy to use and works well.*

WHAT TO BUY

A **Best Buy** is a good performer whose purchase price and running costs combined are among the lowest in the test.

Similar models are technically the same and get the same scores in our tests, but may have different features or finishes (such as stainless steel vs white).

ELECTROLUX Gallery ESI 6110X (stainless steel) (see footnote (A), page 33, for similar models)	$1499
WESTINGHOUSE SB915WJ (white) (see footnote (B), page 33, for similar models)	$999
MAYTAG Jetclean MJD2000AAW (white) (see footnote (C), page 33, for similar models)	$1099
AEG Favorit 60820 (white)	$1779
WESTINGHOUSE SB907WJ (white) ◂BEST BUY▸ (see footnote (D), page 33, for similar models)	$899
WHIRLPOOL 6ADP5656WHM (white) (see footnote (E), page 33, for similar models)	$1399
BLANCO BFDW640W (white) (see footnote (G), page 33, for similar models)	$1299
DISHLEX DX302WB (white) (see footnote (H), page 33, for similar models)	$999
LG LD14AW2 (white) ◂BEST BUY▸ (see footnote (J), page 33, for similar models)	$999

Whether you're renovating your whole kitchen or just replacing your clapped-out dishwasher, there's a temptation to go all-out with an expensive European brand. Our latest test confirms that a designer name (and designer price) don't necessarily mean a better dishwasher. We still have plenty of good models that hold their own with the flash guys for less than $1000.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

For information such as what to look for when buying a dishwasher, see CHOICE, Jan/Feb 2004, or if you're a personal CHOICE subscriber, go to www.choiceextra.com.au and click on Jan/Feb 04 under 'dishwashers' in the index. You also have access there for a limited time to our interactive **Compare-a-dishwasher** feature: just type in your preferences and it'll find models to match them.

If you don't have the Jan/Feb 2004 issue or access to the internet, call our Consumer Services people toll-free on 1800 069 552 and we'll send you a copy (obviously we can't send you Compare-a-dishwasher).

Brand / model (in rank order)	PERFORMANCE 1 Overall score (%)	2 Washing score (%)	3 Drying score (%)	4 Ease of use score (%)	5 Energy efficiency score (%)	6 Water efficiency score (%)	5 Energy used (kWh)	6 Water used (L)	7 Noise (dB)
ELECTROLUX Gallery ESI 6110X **(A)**	82	80	97	91	62	69	1.58	22	52
WESTINGHOUSE SB915WJ **(B)**	82	77	97	90	63	77	1.55	19	47
MAYTAG Jetclean MJD2000AAW **(C)**	81	75	88	97	68	77	1.37	19	48
AEG Favorit 60820	80	72	96	100	64	66	1.51	23	46
WESTINGHOUSE SB907WJ **(D)**	80	75	94	90	63	75	1.53	20	47
WHIRLPOOL 6ADP5656WHM **(E)**	80	75	79	88	82	81	0.91	17	47
BLANCO BFDW640W **(F) (G)**	79	80	90	84	62	70	1.58	21	54
† **DISHLEX** DX302WB **(H)**	79	70	90	95	63	76	1.54	19	47
LG LD14AW2 **(J)**	79	77	93	72	70	77	1.31	19	47
WESTINGHOUSE Virtuoso SB925	78	78	94	90	57	57	1.75	26	46
BOSCH SGS4072AU **(K)**	77	77	94	69	63	69	1.52	22	46
† **DISHLEX** DX102WB **(L)**	76	78	74	95	61	70	1.59	21	48
† **MIELE** G638SC Plus **(M)**	76	70	73	95	76	75	1.11	19	45
FISHER & PAYKEL Dishdrawer DD603ZW **(N)**	75	75	94	80	53	60	1.88 **(N)**	25 **(N)**	47
FISHER & PAYKEL Nautilus DW920 (ww) **(P)**	75	71	90	66	68	75	1.36	20	51
ASKO D3100 **(F) (Q)**	74	69	81	55	77	87	1.06	15	46
WHIRLPOOL ADP5540 **(R)**	74	70	80	55	85	78	0.79	18	51
† **SIMPSON** Eziset S2B890WJ **(S)**	71	75	67	95	57	59	1.74	25	47

Profile of new model

The only new model added to the *What to buy* list since our last dishwasher update in April 2004 is profiled here; see that issue and the original article in Jan/Feb 2004 for profiles of other models in the list (or go to www.choiceextra.com.au and click on Jan/Feb 04 or April 04 under 'dishwashers' in the index).

DISHLEX DX302WB

(See footnote (H), far right, for similar models)

Price: $999

GOOD POINTS

- Excellent ease of use, with height-adjustable top basket and foldable tines in the bottom basket.
- 'Delay start' option.
- 'Time remaining' display.
- 'Program change' feature.
- 'Program cancellation' feature.

BAD POINTS

- None to mention.

WHIRLPOOL PROBLEMS ON THE MEND

While testing for our Jan/Feb 2004 report, we found a problem with the programming of some **WHIRLPOOL** models, but it declined to recall the faulty models.

WHIRLPOOL has now announced it will be advertising on a state-by-state basis so that consumers who bought any of the affected models can have the problem rectified.

If you purchased any of the following **WHIRLPOOL** models, you can book a service call by ringing 1800 556 155. WA is first up, but consumers from any state can call now to book themselves in when **WHIRLPOOL** starts the service program in their state. Affected models are listed below; serial numbers are only those from 330228016745 to 330308015179:

- **6ADP5540WH.**
- **6ADP5550WH.**
- **6ADP8540IX.**
- **6ADP5656WHM.**
- **6ADG7554WHM.**

	8 FEATURES				SPECIFICATIONS								COSTS	
Cycle time (minutes)*	Height-adjustable top basket	Foldable / removable tines	Anti-flood device	Concealed element	Dimensions (H x W x D, cm)	9 Water connection	Place settings	10 Type	Warranty (years)	Origin	Manufacturer / distributor		11 Running cost ($ / 10 years)	Price ($)**
107	✓		✓	✓	82 x 60 x 58	C rec	12	BI	2	Italy	Electrolux		800	1499
106	✓	F	✓	✓	82 x 60 x 59	C rec	12	BI	2	Australia	Electrolux		774	999
94	✓	F, R	✓	✓	80 x 60 x 60	H or C	12	FW / BI	2	Italy	Maytag		694	1099
112	✓	F	✓	✓	85 x 60 x 60	H or C	12	FW	3	Germany	Andi Co		774	1779
106	✓	F	✓	✓	82 x 60 x 59	C rec	12	BI	2	Australia	Electrolux		768	899
97	✓	F, R	✓	✓	85 x 60 x 60	H or C	12	FW / BI	2	Germany	Whirlpool		476	1399
107	✓		✓		85 x 60 x 60	C rec	12	FW / BI	2	EU	Major Electrical Appliances		798	1299
105	✓	F	✓	✓	82 x 60 x 61	C rec	12	BI	2	Australia	Electrolux		772	999
98	✓	F, R	✓	✓	85 x 60 x 60	H or C	14	FW / BI	2	Korea	LG		667	999
124	✓	F	✓	✓	82 x 60 x 59	C rec	12	BI	2	Australia	Electrolux		894	1199
114	✓			✓	85 x 60 x 60	C rec	14	FW / BI	2	Germany	Bosch		774	949
116	✓	F	✓	✓	82 x 60 x 58	C rec	12	BI	1	Australia	Electrolux		805	849
103	✓	R	✓		85 x 60 x 60	H or C	12	FW	2	Germany	Miele		578	1399
118		R	✓	✓	82 x 60 x 58 **(N)**	C rec	14 **(N)**	BI	2	NZ	Fisher & Paykel		953 **(N)**	1399 **(N)**
86		R	✓		83 x 60 x 56	C rec	12	BI	2	NZ	Fisher & Paykel		694	799
100			✓	✓	82 x 60 x 55	H or C	14	BI	2	Sweden	Asko		538	1399
79				✓	85 x 60 x 60	H or C	12	FW / BI	2	Germany	Whirlpool		427	1399
126	✓	F	✓	✓	82 x 60 x 58	C rec	12	BI	2	Australia	Electrolux		887	999

All the models in the table have the basic white finish except the Electrolux Gallery ESI 6110X, which is stainless steel.

† *Newly tested models.*

* *'Normal' or auto-sense wash.*

** *Prices are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers in April 2004.*

(A) *Also available as the ESI 6110U with a textured aluminium finish, $1599.*

(B) *Also available as the SB915KJ with a black finish, $999; and the SB915SJ with a stainless steel finish, $1099.*

(C) *Also available as the MJD3000AAW, which may be quieter and has extra features, $1299.*

(D) *Also available as the SB907SJ with a stainless steel finish, $999.*

(E) *Also available as a fully integrated model, 6ADP7554WHM, $1695.*

(F) *Discontinued but may still be available in some stores.*

(G) *Also available as a semi-integrated model, the BFDW640S, with a stainless steel control panel, $1549; and the BFDW650S with a stainless steel control panel and satinated aluminium door (it also has some additional features), $1599.*

(H) *Also available as the DX3025B with a stainless steel finish, $1099.*

(I) *Also available as the LD14AT2 with a stainless steel finish, $1499.*

(K) *Also available as the SGU4025AU with a stainless steel finish, $1299.*

(L) *Also available as the DX1025B with a stainless steel finish, $949.*

(M) *Also available as a semi-integrated model, G638SCI Plus, with white, black, aluminium or stainless steel control panels, $1599.*

(N) *Also available as the DD603J, an integrated model, $1599; DD603 (ss) with a stainless steel finish, $1499; and DD603 (m) with an iridium finish, $1649. Water and energy use, price, running costs, dimensions and place settings are for two Dishdrawers, to make results comparable with the other models. You can buy just a single drawer, which has the model number DS603.*

(P) *Also available as the DW920 (Bk) with a black finish, $849; and the DW920 (ss) with a stainless steel finish, $949.*

(Q) *Also available in a stainless steel finish, or semi-integrated with a metal-grey control panel, both $1549.*

(R) *Also available as the 6ADP854OIX with a stainless steel finish, $1279.*

(S) *Also available as the 52B890SJ with a stainless steel finish, $1099.*

1 Overall score

This is a combination of the following scores, rated as follows:

- Washing performance: 30%
- Drying performance: 25%
- Ease of use: 15%
- Energy efficiency: 15%
- Water efficiency: 15%

2 to 7

See notes 2 to 7 with the table in CHOICE, Jan/Feb 2004, for information on what was tested and measured to achieve these scores. Or go to www.choiceextra.com.au and click on Jan/Feb 04 under 'dishwashers' in the index.

8 Features

See the Jan/Feb 2004 issue (or go to www.choiceextra.com.au) for more on the features listed in the table. 'R' means the tines are removable, 'F' that they can be folded down.

9 Water connection

H or C: You can connect the dishwasher to hot or cold water.

C rec: The manufacturer recommends connection to a cold tap, and the dishwasher heats the water itself (all dishwashers have a heater).

See the Jan/Feb 2004 article or go to www.choiceextra.com.au for the pros and cons of connecting to hot or cold water.

10 Type

FW: Freestanding, with a worktop (can generally be built-in as well).

BI: Built-in (some mightn't have top or side panels).

Some models are also available as semi-integrated (you can fit a front panel to the door to match the rest of your kitchen cupboard doors) or fully integrated (the whole front of the machine can match your kitchen, with the controls hidden inside the door). See the table footnotes for details.

11 Running costs

This is an estimate of how much it'll cost you to run the machine over 10 years for water and electricity if you run one full load every day using the 'normal' cycle. The calculations are based on 12.5 cents per kWh for electricity, and $1 per 1000 L for water. To simplify it we haven't included depreciation or interest costs, nor the cost of detergent.

YOUTH MONEY MATTERS

Youth debt and marketing that targets youth spending have become hot issues in the broader community. Consumer Affairs Victoria has introduced a new website designed to help young people improve their general money management skills and avoid the debt trap — you (or your kids) can try it out at www.moneystuff.net.au.

In a spin over reverse mortgages?

Reverse mortgages are one way for people over 60 to free up cash tied up in their home, without selling the property. You might have noticed several financial institutions recently launched new reverse mortgage products, and more could be on the way.

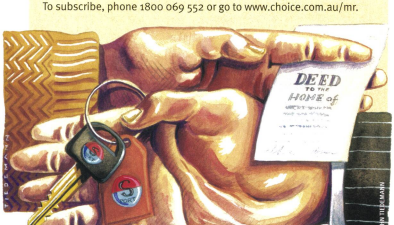
How they work is that you borrow against the value of your home, but don't make repayments. The amount you owe the lender grows over time with 'rolled-up' interest meaning the bank may end up owning a large part of your home. The debt is repaid when you die, move into residential aged care or sell the property. The lender usually covers any loss if the debt becomes greater than the property value.

Reverse mortgages can help you maintain or increase your standard of living as you get older, or keep your financial independence without needing to sell your home or move to a smaller one. One 70-year-old consumer told us about the $21,000 reverse mortgage he used to buy a sports car!

However, there are also drawbacks, in that reverse mortgages may limit your options in the future. After paying back the loan you may not have enough money left to buy into a retirement village; the value of your estate will be reduced; and these loans can have an impact on your eligibility for Centrelink payments.

Product terms and conditions vary, and interest rates are generally higher than on standard home loans.

If you're considering a reverse mortgage, there's a borrower checklist and a comparison of different reverse mortgages available in a full article in the June/July issue of CHOICE *Money & Rights* magazine. To subscribe, phone 1800 069 552 or go to www.choice.com.au/mr.



TAMARA GRAHAM

Idol votes a moneyspinner

Just so you know what you're up for when the new series of Australian Idol screens later this year, in the last series a vote cost 55 cents per SMS or 190 number call.

The voting poll was conducted by Legion Interactive, a provider of interactive communications services. While participation rates are a closely guarded secret, TV votes are big business; according to Stephen Hourigan, commercial director of Legion Interactive, many millions of viewers participate in these polls.

Of the 55 cents charged, five cents are GST and the majority of the remaining money goes to the carrier — Telstra, Optus or Vodaphone (SMS only). The rest is shared between the TV network and the company conducting the poll.

If you think this sounds like an easy way to make money, be grateful you don't live in the US. The Federal Trade Commission there recently settled charges against a range of companies for deceiving consumers who voted for their favourite American Idol during the 2002–2003 season.

The companies had bought and set up numbers very similar to the toll-free voting number. People who mistakenly dialled these numbers were led to believe they had to call a 900 number to place their vote. They were then charged up to US$3 per call, only to be told the correct toll-free number to call.

What's for dinner, baby?

How much real food is in baby food — and can you do better for your baby? We investigate.

PHOTOLIBRARY

There's no doubt: it's super-convenient and an absolute godsend when your day is rapidly falling apart or you're moving so fast it's all a blur. But what does baby food in jars and cans really offer — and how is it different from what you'd prepare at home?

After carefully sifting through over 150 jars, cans and frozen cubes of baby food, we can confidently say there's baby food, and then there's *real* baby food — and spotting the difference between them isn't always easy.

There are only two mainstream manufacturers on the shelves (**HEINZ** and **GOLDEN CIRCLE**), plus we found two organic brands (**ONLY ORGANIC** and **BABYNAT**) and the frozen newcomer **MOTHERLY CUBES**. All these brands sell at least some lines that are undoubtedly 100% food — that is, completely made from pureed fruit, vegetables, meat and/or cereals (see right).

What isn't obvious, unless you study the labels carefully, is that some other products contain appreciable amounts of water and thickeners. The problem is that it's almost impossible to work out from many labels exactly how much real food and how much thickened water there is (see *Meat and veg*, page 37, for more).

Another concern with commercial baby foods is that some parents may, with the best intentions, keep their children on them for too long — or keep them on the really smooth ones without moving on and adding new textures and family finger foods. This can create real problems, as the baby can end up refusing to eat anything that's not soft and mushy, which can mean a time-consuming and often stressful program of retraining.

We looked at all the baby food we could find out there on the shelves, with a focus on cans and jars and their equivalents (we didn't include baby cereal, baby drinks or rusks/bars). Three categories stood out as interesting: mixed meat and vegetable meals, yoghurt desserts and fruit custards — see Tables 1 and 2 on pages 36 and 38 for what we found.

SIMPLE FOODS: 100%

You can buy jars and cans that you can be sure are 100% real food — you just need to choose carefully. Often looking for single ingredients like 'apple' or simple combinations like 'pumpkin and sweetcorn' will reveal products that are simply fruit or vegetable, with some water for the right consistency if the vegetable is starchy or thick (such as corn or potato).

Dietitians like these simple foods too. One concern with mixed baby foods is that they don't always taste different enough from each other or have a similar texture, and a baby who experiences nothing but mixed baby foods never discovers what a carrot or potato really tastes and feels like in itself.

IN A NUTSHELL

- **Not all baby foods** *are created equal — some have thickeners and water to bulk up 'real food'.*
- **Baby food is handy,** *but is best used as a convenience food, not every day for every meal.*
- **Some manufacturers** *give full percentage ingredient information on their labels — we'd like to see all companies following their lead.*

TABLE 1. MEAT AND VEGETABLES

Brand / type (in order of % chicken / beef / fish)	1 % ingredients	2 Water the largest ingredient	3 Thickeners	Su (%
CHICKEN				
MOTHERLY CUBES Chicken **(A)**	Vegetables (47.5%), chicken (40%), cooking water (7.5%), chicken stock (5%)			1.2
MOTHERLY CUBES Chicken & vegetable **(A)**	Vegetables (75.8%), chicken (13.3%), cooking water (9.2%), chicken stock (1.7%)			2.6
HEINZ Chicken, noodles and vegetables	Water, chicken (12%), vegetables (12%), yellow split peas, rice noodles (7%)	✓	✓	0.1
HEINZ Chicken casserole, new recipe	Water, tomatoes, chicken (11%), carrots, brown rice, potatoes, sweetcorn, spinach	✓	✓	4.3
HEINZ Chicken, pasta & vegetables	Water, tomatoes, vegetables (16%), chicken (11%), rice, wheat pasta (4.5%)	✓	✓	0.3
HEINZ Chicken & brown rice risotto	Water, vegetables, tomatoes, chicken (10%), brown rice (6%), split peas	✓	✓	0.4
HEINZ Country chicken & vegetables	Skim milk, water, vegetables (19%), chicken (10%), rice, ground rice		✓	1.2
HEINZ Karyn's Moroccan chicken & sweet potato	Water, sweet potato (13%), chicken (10%), tomatoes, split peas, sultanas, wheat couscous, onions, ground rice	✓	✓	2.0
HEINZ Mum's recipe chicken, tomato & pesto risotto	Tomatoes (61%), split peas, chicken (10%), rice (8%), onions, parmesan cheese		✓	0.6
HEINZ Organic autumn risotto with chicken	Water, vegetables, brown rice (11%), chicken (10%), sultanas, ground rice	✓	✓	2.7
HEINZ Organic chicken and sweet potato mash	Water, sweet potato (28%), chicken (10%), potatoes, peas, onions, squash	✓	✓	0.3
BABYNAT Organic vegetables & chicken	Vegetables (71%), water, chicken (9.5%)			ns
GOLDEN CIRCLE Chicken & vegetables	Water, vegetables (29%), chicken (6%), ground rice, skim milk powder, corn polenta	✓	✓	2.0
GOLDEN CIRCLE Chicken pasta	Water, vegetables, pasta (8%), chicken (5%), ground rice, skim milk powder, vegetable oil	✓	✓	1.8
GOLDEN CIRCLE Chicken, vegetables & rice	Water, vegetables (30%), brown rice (8.5%), chicken (5%)	✓	✓	1.2
GOLDEN CIRCLE Vegetables & rice with chicken **(B)**	Water, vegetables (29%), brown rice (13.5%), chicken (5%), ground rice	✓	✓	0.7
HEINZ Golden sweetcorn & chicken	Water, sweetcorn (17%), chicken (5%), carrots, yellow split peas, brown rice, maize polenta, ground rice, spinach	✓	✓	1.4
BEEF				
MOTHERLY CUBES Beef **(A)**	Vegetables (46%), beef (40%), cooking water (9%), chicken stock (5%)			1.8
MOTHERLY CUBES Beef & vegetable **(A)**	Vegetables (76.3%), beef (13.3%), cooking water (8.7%), stock (1.7%)			1.2
HEINZ Steak & vegetables	Water, vegetables (21%), beef stock, beef (13%), rice, green split peas, ground rice	✓	✓	1.3
GOLDEN CIRCLE Beef & vegetables	Vegetables (39%), water, beef (11%), brown rice, corn polenta		✓	1.5
GOLDEN CIRCLE Beef & vegetables	Water, vegetables (23%), beef (11%), brown rice, tomato paste	✓	✓	1.5
GOLDEN CIRCLE Pumpkin, beef & potato	Water, pumpkin (20%), beef (11%), potato (11%), peas, ground rice	✓	✓	1.5
HEINZ Alphagetti bolognaise	Tomatoes, wheat pasta (29%), onions, beef (10%) beef stock, carrots, romano cheese		✓	1.1
HEINZ Alphagetti, tomato & beef	Tomatoes (33%), water, wheat pasta (11%), onions, beef (10%) beef stock, carrots, romano cheese, ground rice		✓	1.5
HEINZ Beef, brown rice & vegetables	Water, tomatoes, beef (10%) brown rice (9%), yellow split peas, vegetables (8%), apple juice, tapioca flour	✓	✓	0.9
HEINZ Beef risotto	Tomatoes, green split peas, beef (10%) ,rice (9%), water, onions, beef stock		✓	1.4
HEINZ Mum's recipe vegetable & beef risotto	Vegetables (51%), water, rice (11%), beef (10%)		✓	2.0
HEINZ Organic tender beef with vegetable mash	Tomatoes, vegetables (30%), apple juice, brown rice, beef (10%) , ground rice		✓	1.6
HEINZ Pasta, tomato & beef	Water, tomatoes (19%), beef (10%) , carrots, wheat pasta (5%), ground rice, spinach, romano cheese	✓	✓	0.4
HEINZ Pumpkin, potato & beef **(C)**	Pumpkin (46%), water, beef (10%) , potato (6%), beef stock, maize polenta, ground rice		✓	2.2
HEINZ Pumpkin, potato & beef **(C)**	Pumpkin (46%), water, beef (10%) , potato (6%), beef stock, maize polenta, ground rice		✓	2.2
HEINZ Steak & vegetables	Vegetables (35%), water, beef stock, tomatoes, beef (10%) ,rice, ground rice		✓	1.5
ONLY ORGANIC Pumpkin, potato & beef	Water, pumpkin (13%), potato (10%), carrot, beef (9%), beans, ground rice, tomato	✓		1.8
ONLY ORGANIC Tender beef & vegetables	Vegetables (67%), water, beef (9%)			2.0
GOLDEN CIRCLE Alpha bolognaise	Water, alphabet noodles (15%), tomato (11%), beef (7%), vegetables, tomato paste, cheese	✓	✓	1.3
TUNA / FISH				
BABYNAT Organic vegetables & cod	Vegetables (67%), water, cod (8%)			ns
GOLDEN CIRCLE Tuna pasta with tomato	Water, pasta (18%), tomato (11%), vegetables, tomato paste, tuna (2.5%), cheese, ground rice	✓	✓	1.3
HEINZ Creamy tuna & pasta	Water, skim milk, wheat pasta (9%), carrots, ground rice, tuna (2%), unsalted butter, romano cheese	✓	✓	1.4
HEINZ Creamy tuna & pasta	Water, skim milk, wheat pasta (9%), carrots, ground rice, tuna (2%), unsalted butter, romano cheese	✓	✓	1.4

* *This is the typical price we paid when we purchased the bulk of the products in March 2004.*

ns *Not stated.*

(A) *The box contains three kinds of cube: meat and two kinds of vegetable. The first line in the table shows what's in just the meat cubes; the second line is a composite of all three cubes. You get nine cubes of each flavour in each 540 g pack.*

(B) *'Food-sensitive friendly'.*

(C) *See* Jars vs cans, *page 38.*

dium g per 0 g)	4 Age (months)	Type	Size (g)	Price ($)*	Price per 100 g ($)
	6+	Frozen cubes	540 **(A)**	7.98	1.48
	6+	Frozen cubes	540 **(A)**	7.98	1.48
	4+	Can	120	0.78	0.65
	9+	Can	220	1.27	0.58
	9+	Jar	170	1.34	0.79
	6+	Jar	170	1.34	0.79
	9+	Can	220	1.27	0.58
	9+	Jar	170	1.34	0.79
	9+	Jar	170	1.34	0.79
	9+	Jar	170	1.79	1.05
	6+	Jar	170	1.79	1.05
03	8+	Jar	200	4.50	2.25
	6+	Can	120	0.73	0.61
	9+	Can	220	1.27	0.58
	6+	Jar	170	1.79	1.05
	9+	Jar	170	1.34	0.79
	4+	Jar	110	0.93	0.85
	6+	Frozen cubes	540 **(A)**	7.98	1.48
	6+	Frozen cubes	540 **(A)**	7.98	1.48
	6+	Can	120	0.78	0.65
	6+	Can	120	0.73	0.61
	9+	Can	220	1.26	0.57
	6+	Jar	170	1.33	0.78
	9+	Can	220	1.27	0.58
	9+	Jar	170	1.34	0.79
	9+	Jar	170	1.34	0.79
	9+	Can	220	1.27	0.58
	9+	Jar	170	1.34	0.79
	6+	Jar	170	1.79	1.05
	6+	Jar	170	1.34	0.79
	4+	Can	120	0.78	0.65
	4+	Jar	110	0.93	0.85
	9+	Can	220	1.27	0.58
	6+	Jar	200	1.25	0.63
	9+	Jar	170	1.33	0.78
.022	8+	Jar	200	4.50	2.25
	9+	Jar	170	1.33	0.78
	6+	Can	120	0.78	0.65
	9+	Jar	170	1.34	0.79

If you're looking to avoid foods bulked up with thickened water or juice, your best bet is with single-ingredient foods like 'apple' or simple combinations, such as 'pumpkin and sweetcorn' (see page 35). As always, check the ingredients list.

MEAT AND VEG

Just what you get for your money when you buy a meat and veg meal depends to some extent on the brand you buy and the price you're prepared to pay.

Table 1, left, gives the details of all the chicken, beef and fish meals we found on supermarket shelves — and in most cases you only get about 10% chicken or beef (more about fish later). It's what the other 90% or so of the meal consists of that's interesting.

MOTHERLY CUBES and **BABYNAT** fill the rest of their containers with vegetables, and use water or stock to thin the consistency to something a baby can manage. **ONLY ORGANIC** relies only on ground rice to thicken some of its products. All the other meals in the table use thickening agents (usually modified maize starch, and often there's more than one) and many also have water as their largest ingredient. Of course, you tend not to pay as much for them — per 100 g, these are about half the price of **MOTHERLY CUBES** and around a third of the price of **BABYNAT**.

Thickener being used doesn't automatically mean a poor-quality product: it can help to keep ingredients from separating. The problem is that it's often difficult to directly compare how much 'real' food is in all the meals, because the manufacturers don't have to give the percentage of *all* the ingredients on the labels. They only have to list them from largest to smallest and tell you about the percentage of the key ones, such as those mentioned in the name of the food.

1 % ingredients

This column lists the 'food' ingredients present, in descending order by percentage. We haven't included food additives, thickeners (see note 3, right), herbs, spices or flavours. The key ingredient (chicken, yoghurt, etc) and the percentage of it in the food are shown in red.

2 Water the largest ingredient

The position of water in the ingredients list can depend on whether multiple ingredients like vegetables are listed as a group or individually. Without full percentage declarations on the label it's difficult to tell just how much water is in the food.

3 Thickeners

A tick in this column indicates the food contains one or more thickening agent, such as modified starch, maize starch, potato starch, tapioca starch, etc. Foods that can have a thickening effect, such as ground rice, are included in the % ingredients column.

4 Age

This is the minimum age the product is suitable for. General advice is to start babies on solid food at about six months.

NO WAY IN THE UK

Quite a number of the baby foods we found here wouldn't even make it onto UK shelves with their current names.

Unless you have at least 10% beef, chicken or tuna, for example, you can't use the word beef, chicken or tuna first in the name of the food. And you can't use it in the name at all unless it's more than 8% of the product.

TABLE 2. DESSERTS

Brand / type (in order of % key ingredient)	1 % ingredients	2 Water the largest ingredient	3 Thickeners	Sugars (%)	Sodium (mg per 100 g)
YOGHURT DESSERTS					
YOPLAIT PETIT MIAM BABY Yoghurt with fruit puree apple	Yoghurt (>80%), apple juice (≥5%)		✓	12.1	64
YOPLAIT PETIT MIAM BABY Yoghurt with fruit puree strawberry	Yoghurt (>80%), apple juice, strawberry puree (≥5%)		✓	12.1	64
ONLY ORGANIC Apple yoghurt	Apple (65%), yoghurt (30%), ground rice			6.6	15
HEINZ Apple & raspberry yoghurt dessert	Apple juice (59%), yoghurt (26%), apples (3.5%), ground rice, cherry juice, raspberry juice (0.5%)	(juice)	✓	4.9	10
HEINZ Banana yoghurt dessert	Pear juice, yoghurt (25%), bananas (15%), ground rice	(juice)	✓	7.1	24
HEINZ Fruit salad yoghurt dessert	Fruit juice (53%), yoghurt (25%), fruit (16%), ground rice	(juice)	✓	10.7	27
HEINZ Organic creamy banana with yoghurt	Apple juice, yoghurt (25%), bananas (12%), ground rice	(juice)	✓	9.3	15
HEINZ Strawberry yoghurt dessert	Apple juice, yoghurt (25%), strawberry juice (7%), ground rice, cherry juice	(juice)	✓	7.0	30
HEINZ Vanilla & apricot yoghurt dessert	Pear juice, apricots (22%), yoghurt (19%), apples, ground rice	(juice)	✓	11.2	20
HEINZ Strawberry & rice yoghurt dessert	Apple juice, apples, yoghurt (14%), rice (10%), strawberry juice (4%), ground rice, cherry juice	(juice)	✓	6.1	10
HEINZ Banana & peach yoghurt dessert	Water, bananas (23%), pear juice, peaches (14%), yoghurt (12%), ground rice, rice, rolled oats, pearl barley	✓	✓	5.4	12
FRUIT CUSTARD					
ONLY ORGANIC Apple custard	Apple (76%), water, ground rice, whole milk powder			6.7	13
HEINZ Apple custard	Skim milk, apples (25%), water, sugar, ground rice, unsalted butter		✓	9.1	20
GOLDEN CIRCLE Apple custard	Reconstituted skim milk, water, apple puree (22%), apple juice (9%), sugar, ground rice, unsalted butter		✓	11.3	45
HEINZ Fruit custard	Fruit juice (42%), skim milk, peach/apricot (19%), water, sugar, ground rice	(juice)	✓	8.2	15
GOLDEN CIRCLE Fruit custard	Reconstituted skim milk, reconstituted fruit juices (21%), water, mango/apple/pear purees (12%), sugar, ground rice, unsalted butter		✓	9.2	40
GOLDEN CIRCLE Strawberry & banana custard	Reconstituted skim milk, water, sugar, ground rice, strawberry puree (1.5%), unsalted butter, banana puree (1%)		✓	6.5	40
GOLDEN CIRCLE Banana Custard **(A)**	Reconstituted skim milk, water, sugar, ground rice, unsalted butter, banana puree (1%)		✓	6.4	40
GOLDEN CIRCLE Banana Custard **(A)**	Reconstituted skim milk, water, sugar, ground rice, unsalted butter, banana puree (1%)		✓	6.4	40
HEINZ Banana custard **(A)**	Water, skim milk, sugar, ground rice, unsalted butter, banana (1%)	✓	✓	5.4	20
HEINZ Banana custard **(A)**	Water, skim milk, sugar, ground rice, unsalted butter, banana (1%)	✓	✓	5.4	20
HEINZ Strawberry & banana custard	Water, skim milk, sugar, ground rice, strawberry juice (2.5%), unsalted butter, bananas (1%)	✓	✓	6.1	20

See page 37 for notes 1–4.

* *This is the typical price we paid when we purchased the bulk of the products in March 2004.*

(A) *See* Jars vs cans, *right.*

(B) *This product comes in a pack of 4 x 100 g serves, two apple and two strawberry.*

What we'd like to see

Although the labelling on these baby foods complies with the labelling laws, CHOICE thinks parents want full info, to be assured they know exactly what they're buying for their baby, and that the biggest manufacturers could be more forthcoming.

Thumbs up to **MOTHERLY CUBES** for going well beyond what the law requires, giving full information about the percentages of *all* the ingredients in its products. **BABYNAT** products generally have a short and simple ingredient list and don't include thickening agents or ingredients like ground rice, so you can be fairly clear about what you're getting.

The other manufacturers can do better — some of their products give you enough information to choose, others not. We'd like to see full percentage ingredient disclosure on all foods designed for the most vulnerable consumers — babies and young children.

ge nths)	Type	Size (g)	Price ($)*	Price per 100 g ($)
	Pot	400 **(B)**	3.35	0.84
	Pot	400 **(B)**	3.35	0.84
	Jar	128	1.59	1.24
	Jar	170	1.34	0.79
	Jar	110	0.93	0.85
	Jar	110	0.93	0.85
	Jar	110	1.28	1.16
	Jar	110	0.93	0.85
	Jar	170	1.34	0.79
	Jar	170	1.34	0.79
	Jar	170	1.34	0.79
	Jar	128	1.25	0.98
	Can	120	0.78	0.65
	Can	120	0.73	0.61
	Can	120	0.78	0.65
	Can	120	0.73	0.61
	Jar	110	0.92	0.84
	Jar	110	0.92	0.84
	Can	120	0.73	0.61
	Jar	110	0.93	0.85
	Can	120	0.78	0.65
	Jar	110	0.93	0.85

So if something called 'beef and vegetables' only appears from the ingredients list to be about 50% actual beef and vegetables, how much of the rest of the meal is the rice or split peas that have no labelled percentage, and how much the maize starch used to thicken the added water? Only the manufacturer knows.

A baby can no doubt still thrive on all these foods, but are they getting the best nutrition available? If you want to know whether they're getting the same nutrients that straight vegetables and meat pureed with a little water contain, not all brands give you enough information on the label to know for sure.

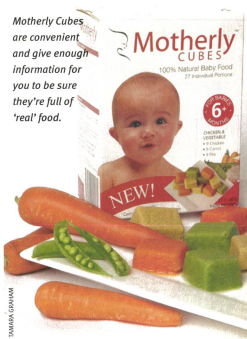
A TASTE OF TUNA

As for tuna meals, we really were surprised to see how little tuna finds its way into most of the offerings on the shelf — the highest was 2.5%. The only fish exception was the 8% wild Icelandic cod in **BABYNAT Organic vegetables and cod**, but even though it's organic you might find its price a bit steep to buy it often.

Manufacturers argue that if they put any more tuna in, babies won't like it. Sure, tuna is a strong flavour — but when we worked out how much would end up in a simple home-made recipe for baby tuna mornay, the answer came in at about 13%.

YOGHURT DESSERTS

Yoghurt has a healthy image because in its raw state it can contain 'good' bacteria that may be helpful in our intestines. But once it goes into a jar and is heat-treated any bacteria are killed, so a healthy image and plenty of calcium are just about all that's left.



Motherly Cubes are convenient and give enough information for you to be sure they're full of 'real' food.

TAMARA GERAKAM

Jars vs cans

Several products that have exactly the same ingredients and are for the same age group are available in both a jar and a can — but the jar contains 10 grams less and costs about 20 cents more (see both tables for examples). The jar is resealable and maybe looks a bit nicer, but don't be fooled if you're watching your pennies.

What to look for

It's sometimes possible to work out just how much real food a baby food contains. Here are some tips to head you in the right direction.

- Check the ingredients list. The largest comes first and so on down to the smallest.
- The ingredients in the food's name should have their percentage declared; sometimes this can also help to give you an idea of how much of some other ingredients there are, depending on their relative position in the list.
- Some water may be needed to thin ingredients like potatoes, corn or peas, for example, but large amounts of water along with thickeners (see below) can point to a product that's not all real food.
- The most common thickening agent in baby food is maize thickener, also called maize starch, modified maize starch or additive 1422. It can help to give a texture that doesn't separate in the jar, so it's ready to go without stirring. It can also be used to turn fruit juice or water into what looks like a jar of food.
- Other ingredients that can be used to bulk up a food without adding much else are ground rice and other cereals. Babies don't need a high-fibre diet, they need a high-nutrient diet, and refined cereals don't have a lot to offer apart from their filling ability.
- Think about what you'd put in it if you were making the food at home — if there are too many other ingredients of dubious value, there may be better choices on the shelf.

TAMARA GRAHAM

All the organic baby foods we found were certified organic by a reliable certification scheme and so should deliver what they promise. However, be aware that even certified organic foods can contain small amounts of non-organic ingredients — generally things like food additives, and herbs and spices that aren't available in organic varieties. You should be able to see on the label exactly which components are organic and which aren't.

DIY made easy

There are easy options if you don't want to use cans or jars even as convenience foods:

- Mashed banana, pawpaw or avocado are all pretty instant foods.
- Freezing your own creations in ice-cube trays or baby-size containers for when you don't have the time is a lifesaver.
- Pureeing or mashing what the rest of the family is eating is the simplest of all, as long as your whole family has a halfway decent diet — and you keep in mind that just as commercial baby foods are only allowed to contain certain levels of salt and sugar, so should your home-made baby food. Salt can be particularly easy to overdo: don't add it to your baby's cooking, and take out their portion before you add it to the rest of the family's (if you do); go easy on salty ingredients like cheese; and choose low-salt versions of things like creamed corn, baked beans or tuna.
- This article doesn't cover all (or even most) aspects of introducing solids to your baby — your baby health clinic is a good place to start.

The most yoghurt you can hope for in most jars of baby yoghurt dessert is about 30%. And again, it's what the other 70% or more is made up of that differentiates the products.

All the **HEINZ** products have fruit juice as their largest ingredient (except one that has water), usually thickened with ground rice and maize starch. The amount of solid fruit content varies, but is usually less than 20%. **ONLY ORGANIC** contains a lot more fruit than any of the other yoghurt desserts.

The **YOPLAIT** products have more yoghurt than the others, and also have the advantage of being a chilled product that claims to retain live bacteria. They also claim to be specially formulated to make the milk proteins more digestible and closer to breast milk or formula than cow's milk.

An alternative to buying baby yoghurt at all is mixing some pureed fruit — or mashed banana or other soft fruit — with regular plain yoghurt. But all commercial products meant for babies are restricted in how much sugar they can contain, so they're better choices for babies than flavoured adult yoghurts.

FRUIT AND CUSTARD

"Unnecessary" is how one specialist baby dietitian described the worst of these offerings. The few at the top of the table do at least offer a reasonable proportion of pureed fruit — **ONLY ORGANIC Apple custard** stands out with 76% apple. But most of the others could be described as thickened diluted milk with sugar and a tad of fruit.

We don't think banana custard with 1% banana and watered-down milk is close to good enough. While babies under one year old shouldn't have cow's milk as their main milk drink, high-calcium weaning foods are important to bolster levels as the amount of breastmilk or formula they drink falls.

There are similar vanilla, chocolate and caramel custards (which we didn't put in the table for space reasons) — thickened diluted milk with sugar and flavour. You'll even find baby crème caramel and chocolate mousse — which amount to thickened milk with around one tablespoon of sugar per (170 gram) jar.

We also found a soy custard that contained no soy milk (despite the jug shown on the label) — mainly water, sugar, thickeners and 1.8% soy protein. And another that was made with more water than soy milk.

And to cap off our baby food odyssey, we found egg custards with as little as 1% egg yolk in the mix. The manufacturers argue that's all that's needed to give the 'flavour' of egg. But the picture of numerous eggs on the label gives far more than an impression that it might taste a bit eggy — don't be fooled.

THE VERDICT

As one specialist paediatric dietitian put it to us, jars and cans are convenience foods for babies, and like convenience foods for adults, they're great when you're busy or out, but not for every meal. Choose wisely, feed home-made meals too and start introducing chunkier textures as soon as your child is ready.

Start introducing solids to your baby around six months old; by the time they're one year old they should be eating a varied, healthy, family-food-based diet. ■

Cooking up a STORM

Blissful baking and thrilling grilling — we find the ovens that are the toast of the roast.

A good oven can mean the difference between sou-flop and soufflé, and a bad one can turn a straightforward roast into a dog's dinner. Regardless of whether you use your oven daily to cook food for a growing family, for producing dishes to serve at fancy dinner parties, or for heating up a frozen meal once in a while, you want it to do the job well.

Our experienced home economist put 10 electric multifunction ovens to the test. 'Multifunction' means the oven can use a combination of top, bottom, grill and sometimes rear elements plus a fan to optimise different cooking, baking and grilling needs — see *Oven and grill functions*, page 42, for details.

To rate their performance, she cooked up a storm, using each oven to bake scones, sponge cakes, meringues and custard tarts and to roast chooks according to the manufacturers' recommended oven settings. She also grilled sausages, and made toast under the grill (see notes 2 and 3, page 44 for more information on the cooking tests). While some ovens stood out (see *What to buy*), our home economist was impressed by the group as a whole.

The ovens and grills were also rated on how easy they are to operate and clean, and technical tests, including heat loss and door temperature, were conducted.

WHAT TO BUY

SIMPSON Evolution 83E711W	TEST BUY	$901
FISHER & PAYKEL BI602E		$1049
MIELE H310-1B		$1399
ELECTROLUX Chef EOC643W		$1021
WESTINGHOUSE POL668W		$1381

IN A NUTSHELL

- **All the ovens on test performed well overall,** *with a couple achieving almost perfect scores for baking or grilling.*
- **Think about what you cook most,** *and whether you use the oven or grill more often, then check the table and profiles to help choose the model that suits you best.*

THERMOSTATS: THE HEAT IS ON

Our tests found that two of the models were running too hot and needed their thermostats replacing. If your oven frequently overcooks or burns food and you suspect the oven temperatures aren't correct, try baking a cake using a reputable cake mix brand, as its suggested temperatures should produce a good result. If you get a poor result you may have a faulty thermostat — contact the oven manufacturer's customer service department to request a visit from a service technician.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

CONTROL PANEL

- Rotary knobs, buttons or switches that are easy to grip or operate, and labels that are easy to read and understand.
- A light that indicates the oven is in use, and another that shows it's warming up.
- A timer is useful to let you know when food's cooked or needs attention (see the table, page 44, for model details).

INSIDE

- An interior light — check when buying that it's easy to replace the bulb.
- A good range of shelf positions. Three or more shelves may be handy, especially if you often cook several items at the same time.
- Shelves that don't slope down when pulled out with the weight of a casserole or baking dish on them.
- Shelves with an effective safety stop mechanism to prevent the whole shelf being pulled straight out of the oven or grill.

OVEN DOOR

- An oven door that's light and easy to open, and stays open in any position (without falling fully open or slamming shut). The **WHIRLPOOL** door was particularly stiff and hard to open.
- Enough space between the door handle and door to fit your fingers without burning them.
- A large enough window for a clear view inside — make sure you'll be able to see something cooking on the top shelf or the grill.

GRILL

- A smokeless grill tray — so-called because it traps fat and grease below it, which reduces smoke — rather than a wire rack (see right). Because the grill is inside these ovens, spattering and smoking fat can make them messy (the table has model details.)
- A grill tray that's easy to slide in and out and comes out far enough to easily manipulate food at the back of the tray.
- A grill element that's set high into the ceiling or that has a shield in front, so that it can't easily come into contact with fingers.
- At least two grill tray heights.

EASY CLEANING

- Smooth surfaces and good access to all areas of the grill and oven.
- Self-cleaning surfaces (catalytic liners — see right) that absorb fat splatters: three ovens in this test have them (see the table). To clean them you heat the oven at a high temperature for an hour and, when cool, wipe them with a damp cloth. This only works for fat splatters on walls that have the lining — you still have to scrub the rest. Wiping the liners with a damp cloth after each use is also recommended.

OVEN AND GRILL FUNCTIONS

See the table for whether a model has a function. Be aware that different brands often use different terms for the same oven and grill functions.

- **Quick preheat:** The **ASKO, KLEENMAID, MIELE** and **WESTINGHOUSE** all have a fast setting that reduces the oven preheat time in three of them from an average of 12–14 minutes to around 8–10 minutes. The **KLEENMAID** was faster, preheating the oven in just over 6.5 minutes.
- **Top and bottom elements** (sometimes called 'conventional bake'): Standard convection baking, where heat comes from the top and bottom of the oven: the temperature tends to be slightly hotter towards the top, allowing food to brown on top. It's good for cooking scones, muffins, cakes, fruit cakes (which require slow, gentle cooking), baked custards, pies, pastry, pavlovas, roasts and casseroles.
- **Bottom element only** (also called 'base' or 'classic' bake): Another form of conventional baking where heat comes from the bottom element only. It's particularly recommended for pizzas, quiches and pies, as the base of the pan can absorb more radiated heat from the element. Some ovens can operate the bottom element with the fan.
- **Fan-forced:** Heat comes from an element at the back of the oven and is circulated by a fan surrounded by the element. The oven heats relatively quickly and efficiently, and heat is distributed evenly throughout, which is helpful for multishelf cooking. It can be useful for some cakes, pavlovas, roasts, pies, pastry and oven-bake ready meals.
- **Fan-assisted:** The top and bottom elements of the oven are used, while a fan circulates heat. This can be useful for cooking on more than one shelf at once as it helps to distribute the hot air evenly.
- **Rear and bottom elements plus fan:** This gives a very even heat and can be useful for roasts.
- **Grill with fan:** Can be used to cook chicken and other roasts.
- **Defrost:** Although all the ovens tested have this function — where the fan operates without or on low heat, moving air around to help defrost food — for food safety reasons we recommend you defrost food in the fridge or microwave so it doesn't stay at unsafe temperatures for any length of time.

Catalytic liners make an oven much easier to clean — see left.

A smokeless grill tray (left) traps fat and grease below it unlike a wire rack (far left).

Profiles

Models in the *What to buy* list are profiled here in rank order. Prices are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers in May 2004.

SIMPSON EVOLUTION 83E711W

Price: $901 BEST BUY

GOOD POINTS

- Almost a perfect score for oven cooking: excellent results for scones, sponge cake, meringues, custard tart and roast chicken.
- Excellent at grilling.
- Easy to use controls.
- Smokeless grill tray.
- One of the cheapest ovens in the test.

BAD POINTS

- Difficult to replace the light bulb.
- The highest door temperature measured (58°C).
- Grill element is exposed and easy to touch.

ELECTROLUX CHEF EOC643W

Price: $1021

GOOD POINTS

- Excellent at grilling.
- Excellent result for scones, sponge cake and custard tart; very good meringue and roast chicken.
- Easy to use controls.
- Smokeless grill tray.
- Shield in front of grill element.
- Timer has a child lock that prevents the oven being turned on.

BAD POINTS

- None noted.

FISHER & PAYKEL BI602E

Price: $1049

GOOD POINTS

- Almost a perfect score in the grilling test.
- Excellent result for scones, sponge cake and roast chicken; very good meringue and custard tart.
- Easy to use controls.
- Smokeless grill tray.
- Shield in front of grill element.
- Lots of shelf positions.
- Timer has a child lock that prevents the oven being turned on.

BAD POINTS

- None noted.

WESTINGHOUSE POL668W

Price: $1381

GOOD POINTS

- Excellent result for sausages, scones and roast chicken; very good meringue.
- Smokeless grill tray.
- Shield in front of grill element.
- Timer has a child lock that prevents the oven being turned on.
- Good result for heat loss.

BAD POINTS

- Lower results for the sponge cake and custard tart than the others in the *What to buy* list, but still OK.

MIELE H310-1B

Price: $1399

GOOD POINTS

- Excellent at grilling.
- Excellent result for scones, meringues and roast chicken; very good sponge cake.
- Rear wall and ceiling have self-cleaning liners.
- Smokeless grill tray.
- Fat filter for the fan.
- Shield in front of grill element.
- Relatively low external door temperature.
- Best result for heat loss.

BAD POINTS

- Only one shelf (rack) supplied plus two trays, and the equal smallest oven volume in the test.
- Failed shelf 'tilt down' test, although its shelf has a rail that would probably prevent items from sliding off (but also means you can't easily slide items into and out of the oven).
- Difficult to replace the light bulb.
- No timer.

WHAT ABOUT THE REST?

The remaining ovens all scored well overall too and you'd probably be happy with them, especially if you found them for a good price. However, a few things let them down.

- The **BLANCO** toasted bread unevenly, suggesting the grill element doesn't heat the whole area evenly. Also, its grill tray stoppers — meant to prevent the grill tray being pulled out easily — are very small.
- The **DELONGHI** has a lot of cracks and crevices in the interior that can accumulate grease and grime, and can be fiddly to wipe clean. Its grill tray doesn't have a stopper, and it failed our shelf tilt test with the shelf fully extended (see *Safety issues*, page 45).
- The **WHIRLPOOL** didn't produce a good custard tart, and its grill tray sits on the shelf rack and can easily slide around when you pull it out.
- The **ASKO** also didn't produce a good custard tart, and failed the shelf tilt test.
- The **KLEENMAID** toasted bread unevenly, and has no stoppers on its grill tray.

Brand / model (in rank order)	PERFORMANCE 1 Overall score (%)	2 Oven score (%)	3 Grill score (%)	4 Ease of use score (%)	5 FUNCTIONS Top and bottom elements	Bottom element only	Bottom element plus fan	Fan-forced	Fan-assis
SIMPSON Evolution 83E711W **(A)**	91	99	95	83	✓			✓	
FISHER & PAYKEL BI602E **(B)**	90	90	98	83	✓	✓		✓	✓
MIELE H310-1B **(C)**	89	87	95	85	✓			✓	
ELECTROLUX CHEF EOC6643W **(D)**	86	86	90	83	✓			✓	
WESTINGHOUSE POL668W **(E)**	84	80	85	85	✓	✓		✓	
BLANCO BSO 6330 W **(F)**	79	90	68	78	✓		✓	✓	✓
DELONGHI LMFWII (F6ET) **(G)**	77	83	80	70	✓				✓
WHIRLPOOL 6AKP635/WH **(H)**	77	75	90	68	✓				✓
ASKO U822	74	74	78	70	✓			✓	
KLEENMAID TO 200W **(J)**	72	89	65	65	✓	✓	✓	✓	

* *All grills can be operated with or without the fan.*

** *Depth doesn't include handles and knobs.*

† *This is the basic warranty; some manufacturers guarantee some parts for longer. Conditions may apply; check with the retailer.*

†† *Prices are recommended retail, as provided by manufacturers in May 2004, unless noted otherwise. You can find better prices than these by shopping around.*

(A) *Also available as 83E711S in stainless steel, $961. To be replaced this month by model 63G911: styling changes only, no change to cooking performance.*

(B) *Also available as BI602EBK in black and BI602ESS in stainless steel for the same price.*

(C) *Also available in stainless steel, $1699.*

(D) *Also available as EOC6435 in stainless steel, $1081.*

(E) *Also available as POL668S in stainless steel, $1441.*

(F) *Also available in stainless steel, $1489.*

(G) *Also available as LMFSII in stainless steel, $1099. To be replaced this month by LMFW60 ($999) and LMFS60 ($1099), with different control knobs.*

(H) *Also available as 6AKP635IX in stainless steel, $999.*

(J) *Also available as TO 200X in stainless steel for the same price.*

(K) *120 minutes' duration; turns the oven off automatically — sounds a barely audible single bell at the end of the time, so isn't suitable for timing other activities.*

(L) *Clock with 23 hr 59 min timer duration; sounds an alarm and can be used for timing other activities.*

(M) *120 minutes' duration; sounds an alarm and can be used for timing other activities.*

(N) *120 minutes' duration; turns the oven off automatically. It doesn't sound an alarm so can't time other activities.*

(P) *Self-cleaning removable liners available at extra cost.*

(Q) *The rear wall and roof of the oven have removable, self-cleaning liners.*

(R) *Both side and rear walls have removable self-cleaning liners.*

(S) *Removable, self-cleaning rear panel.*

(T) *Pushbutton for timer.*

(U) *Can increase usable volume with deeper baking dish (HUB 61-35) for $199 at time of purchase.*

(V) *Can be extended to five years on payment of $105.*

(W) *Average retail price.*

1 Overall score

The overall score was made up as follows:

- Oven score: 30%
- Grill score: 30%
- Ease of use score: 40%

2 Oven score

We cooked a variety of foods designed to test the capabilities of the oven — all contributed equally to the score:

- Scones (to test performance at high temperatures and evenness of cooking for a short period of time).
- Sponge cake (to test performance at moderate temperatures and multishelf cooking).
- Meringues (to test performance at low temperatures for a long period of time).
- Custard tart (to test temperature variation during cooking and performance with a combination food).
- Roast chicken (to test the ability of the oven to roast a whole food item).

3 Grill score

We tested the capabilities of the grill with the following food types — both contributed equally to the score:

- Toast (to test the evenness of grill heat).
- Sausages (to test how it cooks thicker food with a higher fat content).

4 Ease of use score

These factors contributed equally:

- The controls.
- Using the oven.
- Using the grill.
- Cleaning.

5 Functions

Cooking programs use the heating elements and fan in different combinations to achieve different cooking effects (see *Oven and grill functions*, page 42, for details).

6 Features

See *What to look for*, page 42, for more on these.

7 Usable oven volume

The height measurement for the usable volume calculation is taken from the lowest shelf or the bottom of a supplied baking tray inserted in the lowest shelf position, and not from the floor of the oven — unless the manufacturer says you can place items there. Only the **ASKO** says this is possible.

8 Running costs over 10 years

These are comparative, not actual: they're based on the energy required to maintain the oven at 150°C above room temperature for two hours a day, at a cost of 12.5 cents/kWh.

FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

Using guidelines provided by an occupational therapist from the Independent Living Centre, NSW, all the ovens were assessed for ease of use by someone with a disability. The model that would be best suited overall is the **SIMPSON**. Other models may suit people with specific restrictions:

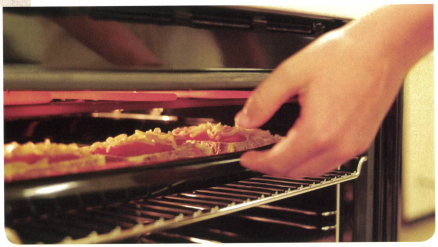
- All the models tested are reasonable for a **wheelchair user** with good upper body control but limited waist movement.
- The **KLEENMAID, SIMPSON** and **WESTINGHOUSE** are a good choice for someone with **upper limb dysfunction**. The door on the **WHIRLPOOL** is difficult to open, requiring considerable hand strength.
- Ideally, people with **back pain** should use a wall oven placed at chest height. A side-opening

ear and ottom ements us fan	Grill*	6 FEATURES Timer	Self-cleaning liners	Smokeless grill tray	SPECIFICATIONS Controls	7 Usable oven volume (L)	Dimensions (H x W x D, cm)**	Warranty (years)†	Origin	Manufacturer / distributor	COSTS 8 Running costs ($ / 10 yr)	Price ($)††
	✓	✓ (K)		✓	Rotary	61	60 x 60 x 59	2 (V)	Australia	Electrolux	615	901
	✓	✓ (L)	(P)	✓	Rotary (T)	57	60 x 60 x 57	2	NZ	Fisher & Paykel	566	1049 (W)
	✓		✓ (Q)	✓	Rotary	42 (U)	60 x 60 x 57	2	Germany	Miele	354	1399
	✓	✓ (L)		✓	Rotary (T)	61	60 x 60 x 58	2 (V)	Australia	Electrolux	562	1021
	✓	✓ (L)		✓	Rotary (T)	61	60 x 60 x 58	2 (V)	Australia	Electrolux	505	1381
	✓	✓ (M)	✓ (R)		Rotary	42	60 x 60 x 52	2	Italy	MEA	447	1429
	✓	✓ (N)			Rotary	45	60 x 60 x 57	2	Italy	DeLonghi	681	999
	✓	✓ (N)	✓ (S)		Rotary	43	60 x 60 x 56	2	Italy	Whirlpool	596	899
	✓	✓ (N)		✓	Rotary	54	60 x 59 x 57	2	Finland	Asko	449	1199
	✓	✓ (L)			Rotary (T)	50	60 x 60 x 59	5	Europe	Kleenmaid	457	1499

Safety issues

There are a few things to look out for that might influence your buying decision.

- **Oven door temperature:** The **ASKO, BLANCO, DELONGHI, KLEENMAID, MIELE** and **WHIRPOOL** had relatively low door temperatures of under 45°C. If the oven will be placed under a bench, you may prefer one of these models.
- **Tilting shelves** (see left): The **ASKO** failed our shelf tilt angle test, which involves placing a weight on the front edge of the withdrawn shelf and measuring the angle of tilt (which shouldn't exceed 6°, to prevent hot dishes and trays tipping off). The **MIELE** also failed this test, but its raised retaining bar along the front edge of the shelf would prevent items from sliding off. The **DELONGHI** has two shelf stops and passed the test at the first stop. However, we found it very easy to override this first stop and pull the shelf out to the second, and the **DELONGHI** failed our tilt test at this second stop.
- **Exposed grill elements** (see below): Some models have the element set high into the oven ceiling, which helps to prevent your fingers or hand brushing against it, and some have a shield in front of the element that protects your hands when removing the grill tray or manipulating the food. But the **ASKO, SIMPSON** and **WHIRLPOOL** have elements that are completely exposed: you could easily touch them accidentally with your fingers, especially if the oven is under a kitchen bench. The **ASKO, BLANCO, DELONGI** and **WHIRLPOOL** have detachable handles for removing the grill tray.



door is also preferable, but all ovens in this test have downward-opening doors.

- The **SIMPSON** is the best for people with **vision impairment.**
- Ovens with simple, clear controls and labelling are best for people with **cognitive impairment.** In this test, the **ELECTROLUX, FISHER & PAYKEL, SIMPSON** and **WESTINGHOUSE** are the most suitable.

Get protected

SIMON BISCIGLIA/TAMARA GRAHAM

Antivirus software is essential for any computer.

IN A NUTSHELL

- **Antivirus software** *is only as good as its last update. Keeping your virus signature files up-to-date is vital to ensure your virus checker works effectively.*
- **Install a new version** *of antivirus software every two to three years, or when you install a new operating system.*

Our sister magazine, *Computer* CHOICE, connected a PC that wasn't protected by antivirus software to the internet during a recent virus outbreak. In less than 10 minutes the computer was infected. The best way to protect your system is to install antivirus and firewall software and keep them updated. Without them, it's only a matter of time before your computer is infected.

Computer CHOICE recently tested 13 of the latest antivirus products: **SYMANTEC NORTON Antivirus 2004** and **TREND MICRO PC-CILLIN Internet Security 2004** came top. The way they look and how you interact with them make these products stand out from the rest. Both packages are easy to navigate, and offer sensible settings and high-level protection by default.

If your budget's limited, try **ALWIL SOFTWARE AVAST!4 Home Edition** or the free version of **GRISOFT AVG**, which is available for personal use. You can download products from manufacturers' websites.

Choose products that are certified by a recognised certification scheme that tests how well products can detect known viruses. Most products in this test were certified. Go to www.check-mark.com or www.virusbtn.com for more on this.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF IT

Antivirus software works by matching suspicious files on your computer against a database of known malicious code called signature files. In order to accurately keep track of new viruses, the signature files stored in your antivirus software need to be regularly updated — weekly, or even more often.

To download new signature files your computer needs to be connected to the internet. Most products automatically update the signature files by default, but the set time may not suit your web usage patterns. When setting up antivirus software you should be able to change its settings and reschedule the time of the automatic updates.

If you disconnect midway through the download, the software won't be up-to-date and you won't be protected from a new virus outbreak.

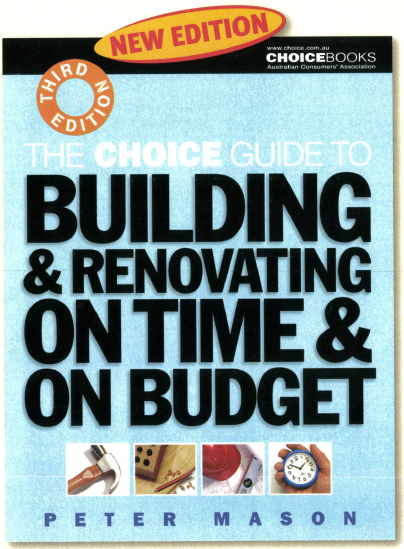
Whenever your computer is switched on, the antivirus software checks for viruses. It should identify an infected file when it gets on your system or when it's manipulated, such as opened or renamed. This is called on-access or real-time detection. Most software should be set to check all files by default, but you can change the settings if needed.

Antivirus software can also be set to scan your entire computer at a time that suits you — called on-demand or manual detection. This is more thorough than on-access detection, so can take some time. You should also be able to scan specific files and folders, but to be sure your computer isn't infected by a virus, make sure the software regularly scans all parts of your system, including all files and file types.

For more information on antivirus software, see our free article, *All about antivirus software*, at www.choice.com.au/computers. To subscribe to *Computer* CHOICE, go to www.choice.com.au/magazines or phone 1800 069 552 toll-free. ■

WHAT TO BUY

Symantec Norton Antivirus 2004	$91
Trend Micro PC-cillin Internet Security 2004	$90



THE CHOICE GUIDE TO BUILDING & RENOVATING ON TIME & ON BUDGET

Third Edition

PETER MASON

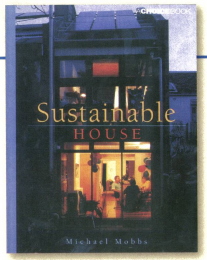
Do you want to improve your home but aren't sure how to find and work with tradespeople to get the job you want? Are you postponing overdue maintenance because of bad experiences with workers in the past?

This is the perfect book for anyone who owns a home or intends to buy, build or renovate one. It describes in plain language what should happen during building or renovating jobs and the best way of directing the people you employ to build, maintain or improve your home.

Fully revised, this bestseller also balances practical considerations with 'greener' options for building or renovating, so that you can carry out home improvements with a clear conscience in these times of increasing environmental awareness.

$22.50 CODE: BRT3

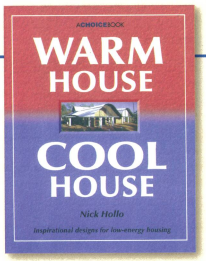
All CHOICE Books are 10% cheaper than normal retail



SUSTAINABLE HOUSE

Find out how to create a sustainable, environmentally friendly house almost entirely self-sufficient in electricity, water and waste disposal.

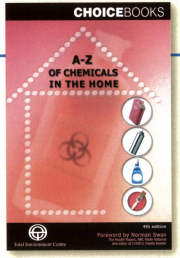
$31.50 CODE: SUSH



WARM HOUSE COOL HOUSE

See how clever and attractive design can keep a house cool in summer and warm in winter. Examples come from all over Australia.

$29.70 CODE: WHCH

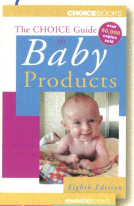


A-Z OF CHEMICALS IN THE HOME

An easy-to-read directory — find out all you need to know about the risks and toxicity of common chemicals in the home.

$19.80 CODE: AZC4

CHOICEBOOKS



CHOICE BABY BOOKS

THE CHOICE GUIDE TO BABY PRODUCTS
8TH EDITION

The only guide you'll need when shopping for baby products.

REDUCED TO $15.00 CODE: CBP8

THE A-Z OF BABY HINTS

Packed with almost 200 up-to-date ideas and hints you can turn to.

$22.50 CODE: AZBH

BABY GAMES

Child's play from birth to three years.

$19.80 CODE: BGCB

KIDS' GAMES

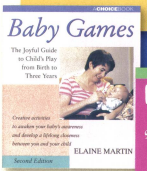
Child's play from three to six years.

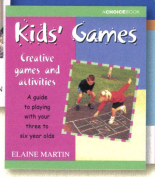
$19.80 CODE: KGCB

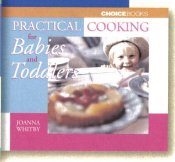
PRACTICAL COOKING FOR BABIES AND TODDLERS

Over 100 recipes your baby, toddler and the whole family can enjoy.

$19.80 CODE: PCFB

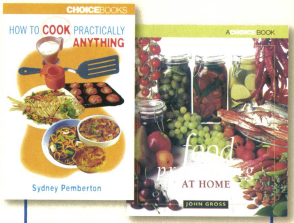

CHOICEBOOKS
Baby Games
The Joyful Guide to Child's Play from Birth to Three Years
Creative activities to awaken your baby's awareness and develop a lifelong closeness between you and your child
ELAINE MARTIN
Second Edition





OR BUY ALL FIVE FOR $90
Code: BUBB

Buy 3 or more books and postage is FREE



HOW TO COOK PRACTICALLY ANYTHING

Basic information about food and cooking for both the beginner and experienced cook.

$19.80 CODE: COOK

FOOD PRESERVING AT HOME

A practical and easy-to-follow guide to a range of preserving options, from smoking, drying and freezing to pickling and canning.

$26.10 CODE: FPAH

ORDER FORM

I enclose ❑ cheque ❑ money order (payable to the Australian Consumers' Association)

or I wish to pay by: ❑ Bankcard ❑ Mastercard ❑ Visa ❑ Amex ❑ Diners Club Expiry ___ / ___

Card number

Name on card

Signature

Mr/Ms/Mrs/Miss

Address

Postcode

Phone (day) Subscriber no.

Please allow two to three weeks for delivery. If any order can't be filled for a substantial length of time, we'll let you know and give you the option of cancellation.

AUSTRALIAN CONSUMERS' ASSOCIATION ABN 35 799 246 568 ACN 000 281 925

Code	Title	Qty	Item price	Total price

Postage and handling (waived if buying 3 or more books) $6.00

Total

Send your payment to: Australian Consumers' Association, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204 • Phone (02) 9577 3399 • Fax (02) 9577 3355 • Order online at www.choice.com.au.

Money-back guarantee: If you're not completely satisfied with your purchase, return book(s) within 30 days for a full refund of the purchase price.

THIS FORM MAY BE USED AS A TAX INVOICE. **CB/0407**

recalls&bans

Nowadays there are so many product recalls we may not be able to print all of them in CHOICE. For comprehensive recall information go to the Federal Treasury website: www.recalls.gov.au. If you don't have web access, call the Consumer Safety Unit on (02) 6263 2747.

Companies often rent 1800 numbers for a couple of months after a recall is announced. If the number given is no longer operating, phone the manufacturer or retailer direct.

FOOD: Naturally Good Products has recalled the following soy carob products: **Soy Carob Easter Bunny (125 g), Soy Carob Easter Eggs (box of six 20 g eggs), Soy Carob Coconut Crunch cookies, Soy Carob Ginger Gem cookies, Soy Carob Honeycomb — Dairy Free**, all best-before dates up to April 1, 2005.
The problem: These products contain undeclared milk protein.
What to do: If you have a milk protein allergy or intolerance, don't eat them. Return them to the place of purchase for a refund. For more information call (03) 9460 8050.

MINERAL SUPPLEMENTS: Mayne Consumer Products has recalled **Nature's Own Zinc, Magnesium + B6,** batch number 302614 (in plastic bottles of 75 tablets) and batch numbers 302846 and 400080 (both in plastic bottles of 200 tablets).
The problem: If you took the dosage as directed on the label, you'd be getting 90 mg of zinc, an amount that should only be taken under medical supervision.
What to do: Call 1800 777 889 to arrange its return and a refund, or return it to the place of purchase for a refund.

TOY: Mattel has recalled **Batman Batmobile toy vehicle**, a 20 inch blue and grey plastic vehicle with a detachable motorcycle, with model number BA944 on the bottom.
The problem: Its rear tail wings are made of rigid plastic and come to a point, which poses a hazard to young children.
What to do: Take the toy away from children. Call 1800 674 753 Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm (EST), to order a free modification kit. The modification kit contains two wings without pointed ends that snap onto the toy vehicle, and instructions to carry out the repair at home.

TOY: Associated Retailers has recalled **3-in-1 Royal Rocker Ride On Toy**, serial number T00024, available since November 1, 2003, sold in Toyworld stores.
The problem: It may tip backwards, causing the child to fall off and be injured.
What to do: Stop using it, and return it to your nearest Toyworld store for a refund.

BABY MEDICINE: Brauer Natural Medicine has recalled **Brauer Baby and Child Care Calm** oral liquid, 100 mL bottle, batch number TR049, expiry date 11/06.
The problem: It may contain mould.
What to do: Don't use it. Call 1800 885 252 to arrange its return and a refund.

BABY CLOTHES: Target has recalled **Target baby coverall,** 3-pack, in sizes 00000-0, sold in all Target and Baby Target stores from November 24, 2003. They come in three different designs: yellow with a small farmyard emblem on the chest; yellow, blue and green stripes; and yellow with blue farmyard images.
The problem: The studs may detach from the garment, presenting an ingestion hazard.
What to do: Don't put it on your child. Return it to your nearest Target, Target Country or Baby Target for a refund. For more information call 1800 814 788.

BABY SUNGLASSES: Chevan Enterprises has recalled **2003/2004 Baby Banz** and **Kidz Banz sunglasses**, which have a rubber nosepiece glued onto the bridge of the sunglasses. Affected colours are blue, pink, green, purple, red, orange and black.
The problem: The rubber nosepiece may become detached and pose a choking hazard to small children.
What to do: For replacement sunglasses, return the product via freepost to Chevan Recall, Reply Paid 875, Canning Bridge, Applecross 6153. For more information call 1800 112 269.

SHAVERS: Gillette Australia has recalled the cord and plug on **Braun shaver models:** Syncro 7680, 7630, 7015, 7505, 7570, 7510; Freeglider 6680; and Flex XP 5614, 5600.
The problem: The plug pins may break off and remain wedged in the power socket. If you attempt to remove the pin without turning off the power supply, you may receive an electric shock.
What to do: Return the plug and cord to the Braun Key Service Centre for a free replacement. Call 1800 041 496 for more details.

STEAM CLEANER: Emjoi, Danoz Direct and **Danoz Directions** have recalled all **Steam Dream Compact** cleaners purchased before October 1, 2003.
The problem: An internal washer may fail, allowing steam to escape from the steam button or the seams of the cleaner when the steam button is pressed, posing a potential burn hazard.
What to do: Return it with your name and contact details to Reply Paid 50, ULD Danoz, North Parcel Centre, Unit 6, 7 Gibbs Street, Chatswood 2067, and get a free replacement. For more information call 1300 135 085.

BACK MASSAGER ACCESSORY: Danoz Direct and **Danoz Directions** have recalled the **Abswing back massager accessory**, an optional product designed to fit onto the back of the Abswing. It's made of black plastic, and was sold from November 2002 onwards. The back massager accessory with the white plastic spine is unaffected by this recall.
The problem: The accessory may break under pressure.
What to do: To receive a credit voucher or refund, return it to the place of purchase. If you bought it by mail from Danoz Direct, return the product to Reply Paid 50, ULD Danoz, North Parcel Centre, Unit 6, 7 Gibbs Street, Chatswood 2067, for a credit voucher or refund. Any queries, call 1300 135 085.

RIDE-ON MOWER: Stihl has recalled **Viking ride-on mowers,** models MT433T and MTA33H, manufactured from 1998 and prior to November 2002.
The problem: They may have been fitted with a faulty fuel tank, which could develop cracks. Fuel could then leak out, creating a fire hazard.
What to do: Contact an authorised Viking (Stihl) dealer on 1300 366 665 during business hours, 13 11 97 at any time, or go to www.stihl.com.au and click on 'Your Dealer'. For further assistance with locating the production date of the unit, call 1800 337 927.

RIDE-ON MOWER: Parklands Trading Company has recalled **Murray ride-on mowers**, models 312001x50, 31200x50, 38501x50, 38510x50, 405001x78, 405600x50 and 40560x50, manufactured prior to November 2002.
The problem: They have been fitted with a faulty fuel tank, which could develop cracks. Fuel could then leak out, creating a fire hazard.
What to do: Contact your authorised Murray dealer on 1800 671 417.

GENERATORS: TradeTools Direct has recalled **PowerChief generators**, sold during January and February 2004 by TradeTools Direct stores in Queensland.
The problem: An adaptor with a two-pin plug may have been supplied, which if forced can mistakenly be inserted into a 240 volt outlet, such as that standard on the generators. This is a potential electrocution hazard.
What to do: Contact your nearest TradeTools Direct store for a free generator upgrade.

CAR: Holden has recalled **Holden VY** and **WK models**, built between August 26, 2002, and September 2, 2003, inclusive.
The problem: A power steering cooler hose may rupture during cornering and affect the steering control of the vehicle.
What to do: Contact your authorised Holden dealer.

CAR: Mazda Australia has recalled **some Mazda E2000 LWB cab chassis vehicles**, built from October 4, 2001, to August 20, 2002, within and including the vehicle identification numbers JMoSYEAT100100029 to JMoSYEAT100100362.
The problem: The high-pressure power-steering hose may crack due to thermal fatigue caused by exposure to the heat of the exhaust pipe. This can result in: power steering fluid (oil) leakage; heavy steering; abnormal noise when turning the steering wheel; and, in a worst-case scenario, fire in the vehicle engine bay caused by the power-steering fluid leaking onto hot exhaust components.
What to do: Contact your authorised Mazda dealer, or call 1800 034 411 weekdays between 10 am and 4 pm.

aboutchoice

The Australian Consumers' Association is a non-profit, non-party-political organisation, established in 1959 to provide consumers with information and advice on goods, services, health and personal finances, and to help maintain and enhance their quality of life. It's a Council member of Consumers International.

100% independent. Our income is derived solely from the sale of CHOICE and our other publications and products. All the products we subject to full testing are bought by us in the marketplace; sometimes to get the latest model we may buy directly from a manufacturer where we can select a random sample. We never accept gifts from manufacturers or retailers; we sometimes borrow samples, especially of new products, for quick reviews. We are not beholden to any commercial, government or union interests, and we don't accept advertising.

We test and rate products and services. Our ratings are usually based on quality without regard to price, and are derived from lab tests, expert judgments and reader surveys. If a product is high in quality and relatively low in price, we deem it a Best Buy. A rating applies only to the brand and model tested, not to other models sold under the same brand name, unless so noted.

Representing your interests. We lobby and campaign on behalf of consumers to promote their rights, to influence government policy, and to ensure consumer issues have a high profile in the public arena.

'No commercial use' policy. Our ratings and reports may not be used in advertising or for any other commercial purpose. ACA will take all steps to prevent commercial use of its materials, its name, and the name of CHOICE or its other publications and products. Please report any apparent violation to the Consumers' Association, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204; phone (02) 9577 3399; fax (02) 9577 3355; email auconsumer@choice.com.au.

Permissions. Reproduction of CHOICE, CHOICE Books and other CHOICE publications, in whole or in part, is forbidden without prior written permission (and is never permitted for commercial purposes). Address requests to CHOICE Consumer Services at the address below.

Your privacy. We're committed to protecting your privacy, and abide by Australia's National Privacy Principles. We never sell or give our mailing lists to other organisations. If you'd like to read our privacy policy, it's on our website or we can send you a copy.

All literary and artistic works and compilations of information are the subject of Australian and international copyright. © Australian Consumers' Association 2004. CHOICE™ is a trademark of the Australian Consumers' Association. All rights reserved.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Peter Kell. **Executive assistant:** Georgina Saltos. **DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER:** Norm Crothers.
CHOICE: Editor Jane Mackenzie. **Writers/journalists this issue** Sharon Aris, Birgitt Baader, Karina Bray, Luisa Bustos, Rachel Clemons, Alan Dooley, Michael Hohl, Clare Hughes, David Lovejoy, Liz Munn, David Oakenfull, Justine Parker.
CONTENT GENERATION: Zara Baxter, Rachel Clemons, Michael Hohl, Kim Laurie, David Lovejoy, Liz Munn, David Oakenfull, Martha Psiroukis, Chris Ruggles.
RESEARCH AND TEST CENTRE: Manager John Ashes. **Laboratory manager** Klaus Neuscheler. Antonio Bonacruz, Brian Champion, Geoff Day, Peter Horvath, Mohamed Jawahir, Dilek Kozan, Fiona Mair, Neill Patterson, Benjamin Rossetto, Matthew Steen, Petr Valouch. **Buying** Dorothy Kneale, Kate Murdoch. **Research** Christine Shaday, Joe Sydney.
COMMUNITY: General Manager Mary Harris. **Research** Belinda Chu, Ann Munroe, Markus Powling. **Marketing co-ordinator** Kellie Thomson.
CONSUMER SERVICES: Manager Bill Stuart. **Team leader** Lizzie Ball. Zac Godkin, Rachel Green, Silvana Ristevska, Elke Strecker.
QUALITY AND IT SYSTEMS: General Manager Barbara Manchester. **Quality control: Manager** Pam Gardiner. **Verifiers** Chris Barnes, Sharon Cauduro, Corinna Horrigan, Elizabeth Hurtt, Lawson Lobb, Scott O'Keefe, Karen Palmer. **IT: Manager** Stephen Macdonald. Charles Ly. **Subscriptions: Manager** Bill Stuart. Thelma Bracken, Nootaya Hwang, Lynda-Maree Morgan, Fiona Pollard.
PRODUCTION: Production manager Darrell Sly. **Art director** Michelle Havenstein. **Senior designer** Jacqui Fry. **Photographer** Tamara Graham. **Online production co-ordinator** Amira Meyer.
CHOICE BOOKS: Consultant Publisher Richard Smart.
FINANCE AND PROPERTY: Manager Alan Johnston. **Accounts** Jeanette Dwyer, Kang Zhu Ge, Sera Vunilaoloa. **Administration** Jeanette Porter. **Library** Jane Wholohan. **Records management** Shirley Colless.
Marketing statistics by GfK Marketing Services.
Financial information supplied by Cannex.
Services information supplied by ASSIRT.
The Australian Consumers' Association is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. ACN 000 281 925. ABN 35 799 246 568.
Registered office 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204.

Want more?

www.choice.com.au

Get all our test and research results plus:

- Compare-a-product tools
- Credit card and insurance calculators
- New and used car databases
- Food and health quizzes
- Scams, campaigns and polls
- Extra product profiles
- Lab video footage

Special offer

Membership of CHOICE Online is **just $7.50** per quarter (normally $14.95) for personal CHOICE subscribers. To take advantage of this discounted price go to **www.choiceextra.com.au** and follow the prompts.

index

HOW TO USE THIS INDEX
Bold type indicates a test, survey or trial report, normal type indicates other articles.
* indicates an update of a previous report, additions or corrections to reports, small follow-up items, letters or recalls. For space reasons, the index generally doesn't include Choice Cuts and other small pieces.

Advertising drugs Jun
Air conditioners, split-system **Oct**, May*
Air quality, indoor Sep
Antivirus software **Jul**

Baby food **Jul**
Backpacks, day **Jan/Feb**
Baked beans **May**
Baldness treatments Jun, Dec*
Bandaids **Jul**
Bathroom cleaners **Nov**
Beer, premium **Sep**
Biscuits, choc chip **Nov**
Brandt steam oven **Nov**

Camcorders, digital **Dec**
Cameras
digital **Oct**, Jan/Feb*
disposable/single-use **Jan/Feb**
Cars
fuel and oil additives Apr
reader reviews Aug, Mar, Jul
repair costs May, Jul*
used car safety Sep
CDMA mobile phones **Nov**
Champagne and sparkling wine **Dec**
Child/baby concerns
baby food **Jul**
high chairs **Oct**
jogger strollers **Jan/Feb**
layback strollers **Aug**
nappies **Apr**
safety gates **May**
Chips, potato **Sep**
Choc chip biscuits **Nov**
Cleaners
bathroom **Nov**
Enjo products **Aug**
microfibre cloths **Aug**
Clothes dryers **May**
Coffee, pre-ground for plungers **Jul**
Column heaters **Jun**
Conditioner **Apr**
Cooktops, induction **Aug**
Cordless phones **May**
Corporate social responsibility
GSM mobile phones Jun
running shoes Jan/Feb
Cosmetics, facts vs myths Mar
Credit cards, top 10 and
buying guide Dec
Credit files Jan/Feb, Apr*
Custard **Dec**

Daypacks **Jan/Feb**
Detergents, dishwasher **Jan/Feb**
Digital camcorders **Dec**
Digital cameras **Oct**, Jan/Feb*
Dishwasher detergents **Jan/Feb**
Dishwashers **Jan/Feb, Apr**, Apr*, Jun*, Jul
Disposable cameras **Jan/Feb**
DIY home sales Nov
Drugs, advertising Jun
Dryers, clothes **May**
DVD and hard disk recorders **Jun**
DVD players **Dec**
portable **May**

Echinacea **Nov**
Enjo cleaning products **Aug**
Ethical manufacture
GSM mobile phones Jun
running shoes Jan/Feb
Ethical super Oct, Dec*

Fat, refresher course and quiz Mar
Financial
credit cards Dec
credit files Jan/Feb, Apr*
ethical super Oct, Dec*
haggling for money products Mar
Fish, misnaming Jul
Food
baby food **Jul**
baked beans **May**
choc chip biscuits **Nov**
custard **Dec**
fat, refresher course and quiz Mar
fish, misnaming Jul
frozen meals **May**
GI explained Apr
health claims Jun
marmalade **Apr**, Jul*
olives **Jul**
percentage labelling Aug
pizza **Oct**
potato chips, wedges, shapes **Sep**
salad, prepacked **Dec**
'sports' water Jan/Feb
tuna, tinned **Jan/Feb**
Fridges
200–299 L **Jun**
portable **Dec**
side-by-side **Nov**
Frozen meals **May**
Fuel and oil additives Apr

Gadgets, useless Apr
Garden
hoses **Oct**
lawnmowers/mulchers, petrol **Dec**
Gas instantaneous water heaters **Oct**
GI (glycaemic index) explained Apr
Groceries, buying online May
Gyms **Jul**

Haggling for money products Mar
Hair conditioner **Apr**
Hard disk and DVD recorders **Jun**
Hay fever treatments Oct
Health
ancillary insurance **Aug**
buying medicines online Mar
claims on food labels Jun
drug advertising Jun
echinacea **Nov**
hay fever treatments Oct
hospital, surviving Oct
Medicare safety net May
mobile phones, EMR Jun
prostheses costs Dec
sunscreens **Nov**
Heaters, column **Jun**
High chairs **Oct**
Home, selling, DIY Nov
Hoses, garden **Oct**
Hospital, surviving Oct
Hot water systems
choosing Oct
gas instantaneous **Oct**

Index, four-year Jun
Indoor air quality Sep
Induction cooktops **Aug**
Insurance
ancillary health **Aug**
travel **Nov**
Internet dial-up problems Aug
Investment, ethical Oct, Dec*
Irons, steam stations **Jul**

Jogger strollers **Jan/Feb**
Jogging shoes **Jan/Feb**
Juicers **Dec**

Kitchen gadgets Apr
Knee-highs **Sep**
Knives, 20 cm cook's **Jun**

Labelling
food, percentage Aug
health claims on food Jun
Lawnmowers/mulchers, petrol **Dec**
Layback strollers **Aug**
LG Solardom oven **Nov**

Manufacture, ethical
GSM mobile phones Jun
running shoes Jan/Feb
Marmalade **Apr**, Jul*
Meals, frozen **May**
Medicare safety net May
Medicines, buying online Mar
Microfibre cleaning cloths **Aug**
Mobile phones
CDMA **Nov**
GSM **Jun**
plans May
safety and EMR Jun
Money — see Banks, Financial
Mulcher mowers, petrol **Dec**
Multitools **Apr**

Nappies **Apr**

Oil and fuel additives Apr
Olives **Jul**
Online shopping May
Ovens
Brandt, steam **Nov**
LG Solardom **Nov**
wall, electric multifunction **Jul**

Percentage labelling of food Aug
Personal care products, facts vs myths Mar
Petrol, additives Apr
Pharmaceuticals, advertising Jun
Phones
cordless **May**
mobile — see Mobile phones
Pizza **Oct**
Plasma TV screens Mar, May*
Plunger coffee, pre-ground **Jul**
Portable DVD players **May**
Portable fridges **Dec**
Potato chips, wedges, shapes **Sep**
Premium beer **Sep**
Prostheses, costs Dec

Real estate agents Mar
Refrigerators — see Fridges
Retirement villages Sep, May*
Running shoes **Jan/Feb**

Safety gates for toddlers **May**
Salad, prepacked **Dec**
Sales tactics, supermarkets May
Selling your home, DIY Nov
Set-top boxes **Apr**
Shoes, running **Jan/Feb**
Shopping online May
Solardom oven (LG) **Nov**
Sparkling wine and champagne **Dec**
'Sports' water Jan/Feb
Steam oven (Brandt) **Nov**
Steam stations **Jul**
Strollers
jogger **Jan/Feb**
layback **Aug**
Sunglasses **Aug**, Oct*
Sunscreens **Nov**
Superannuation, ethical Oct, Dec*
Supermarket sales tactics May

Telephones — see Phones
Television
51 cm **Aug**
68 cm **Nov**
digital set-top boxes **Apr**
plasma screens Mar, May*
Toasters **Mar**
Toothbrushes **Sep**
Travel insurance **Nov**
Tuna, tinned **Jan/Feb**

Video equipment
camcorders, digital **Dec**
DVD and hard disk recorders **Jun**
DVD players **Dec**
portable **May**

Washing machines
Sep, Nov*, **Mar**, Jul*
Water heaters
choosing Oct
gas instantaneous **Oct**
Water, 'sports' Jan/Feb
Water supply May
Wills, making one Apr
Wine, sparkling and champagne **Dec**

COUNCIL MEMBERS

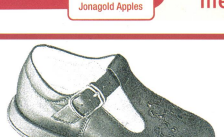
The **Australian Consumers' Association** is governed by an honorary Council elected by the voting members. (For information about voting membership, call (02) 9577 3399.) Members of the Council give their time without reimbursement, and are not engaged as principals in industry, advertising or sales.
COUNCIL: Chair: Chris Field. **Deputy Chair:** Debra Harker. **Members:** Allan Barton, Robin Brown, Cynthia Cliff, Tim Dixon, Dr Ken Harvey, Dianne Hill, Jenni Mack, Phil Marchionni, Professor Ben Selinger, Joan Staples, John T D Wood.

They forgot to mention "low in fat"!

Ah, yes, the all important coleslaw treatment ...

And it's so often missing from garment care labels!

Ma Hao Mai PETTICOAT WORLD
Qualifcation
WASH BY HAND 30°C
NO CHLORINE
NO WRING
IN COLESLAW
MID-IRON 120°C
HAN SHI YI WU QING WU CHANG SHI JIAN FANG ZHI HUO JIN PAO ZAI SHUI LI GUO JIU QING WU YU QI TA BU TONG YI WU XI ZHAI
NO: 23084
SIZE:



childrenswear & toys

25% off

all kid's Fred Bare, OshKosh, Esprit and Seed clothing. Offer excludes children's shoes.

Seed clothing not available at Hornsby, Parramatta, Newcastle, Tuggerah, Woden Valley, Toowong Village, Marion, Karrinyup.

So why the picture of the kids' shoe?

To show what's not included in the sale?

GEORGE FOREMAN™ Toaster
GFTBWCI/GFTBWCV
• 1080watts • Translucent toast warmer lid
• Variable browning control • Cord storage.

PICK ON SOMEONE YOUR OWN SIZE

Our reader's still wondering how a toaster can knock the fat out of a slice of toast — and with less than one gram of fat per slice of white bread, there's not a lot in toast to knock out anyway.

CHILLED PRICES TO THE SNOW.
EARLYBIRDS HURRY! MUST PAY BY 30 APRIL.
New Zealand
BONUS UPGRADE FOR ONLY $85
FROM $879*
* 1 additional night accommodation PLUS 1 FREE
* 1 additional days car rental PLUS 1 FREE
* 5 additional days skiing.
Return airfares to Christchurch including all applicable govt. charges and taxes.
5 nights twin share accommodation in Queenstown.
5 days lift accessory size car, including unlimited kms, insurance, ski racks and snow chains.
3 day Ski Lift Pass.
PLUS Ski Express Meals. Ski guiding, an mountain sausage sizzle, Apres ski activities, and more!
travelworld
call 13 14 35
SKI EXPRESS
13 63 83
Jetset

Seen one mountain ...

If this spectacular mountain vista tempts you to take up Jetset's offer to go to New Zealand, you'd be better off booking a trip to Switzerland — because that's where you'll find the pictured Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau mountains. Sadly, it'll probably cost you a fair bit more too.

HOW ABOUT A LITTLE HELP?

The prize for this month's best entry goes to D Gilmore. *The Hard Word* would like to thank all the readers who've responded with examples of outrageous ads, promotions and products. Thanks to C Wright, G Matts, T Witt, J English, H Ditcham, D Davies, D Gilmore, A Dye and M Cranney for their contributions to this month's *Hard Word*. Please keep them coming.

If you have any examples you think deserve to be on this page, send them to *The Hard Word*, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204, or email your suggestions to thehardword@choice.au.au.

© The Australian Consumers' Association Ltd, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204.